15¢

DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPT. 1, 1924

NO. 163

FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The LOCK and KEY

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

"Hap" Hadley

Mystery Magazine

Vol. VII SEPTEMBER 1, 1924 No. 163

ISSUED TWICE A MONTH

Contents

FEATURE NOVELETTE

The Lock and Key 3
By Hamilton Craigie

TWO-PART SERIAL

A Test of Conscience (Part Two) 47
By J. B. Warrenton

SPECIAL ARTICLES

What Handwriting Reveals 59
By Louise Rice

Bogus Money 46
By Tom Fox (Scotland Yard Detective)

SHORT STORIES

Clue: One Hairpin 17
By Howard Philip Rhoades

Betrayed by Words 24
By Edgar Daniel Kramer

The Last Job 28
By Arthur M. Mills

On the Trail of Dope 33
By Adolphe Barreaux

The Devilish Contrivance 39
By Maurice Coons

Chance 56
By Dorothy Shea

Escaped Convict Phones Prison 16

Legally Dead, Resuscitated in Court 23

Mail Robberies Not Profitable 38

Customs House Sleuths 45

A Convict's Story 55

Copyright, 1924, by Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d St., New York. All rights reserved.
Entered as Second-Class Matter November 5, 1917, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Published by Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d St., New York
Harry E. Wolff, President; L. F. Wilzin, Treasurer; Charles E. Nylander, Secretary
LU. SENARENS. Editor.

Notice.—No letters will be answered or manuscripts returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. The publishers disclaim responsibility for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts. Authors to save time will please name price desired for submitted material.

Subscription Price.—Domestic, Single Copy, 15 Cents; Domestic, Yearly, $3.50; Canada, $3.75; Foreign, $4.00.

All remittances should be sent by express money order, P. O. order, check, registered letter, or draft to insure safety. We will not be responsible for money sent otherwise.

Look! Look! Look!

Our Next Issue Will Contain

Two Big Features and A Story Recently Broadcast

By W. J. Z. on the Radio

THE FEATURE STORIES ARE

FRANK BLIGHTON'S masterpiece of Detective fiction

"THE TALKING DOG"

AND

The finest two-part serial we have ever published, written by JEAN ROSS, and entitled

"THE GHOSTS OF ALWYN LODGE"

HAMILTON CRAIGIE is author of the broadcast short story, and it must be a remarkably good one for W. J. Z. to have used it. The title is "THE SWINGING SHADOW." Tell your friends. They may have heard it on their radios.

Remember, we only give our readers the best fiction obtainable!

THE SHORT STORIES ARE

"LIFE IN DEAD ASHES," by Joe Burke
"THREE FOR SEATTLE," by Earl W. Scott
"SHOES," by Frederick C. Davis
"THE CIGARETTE BUTT," by Joseph Kleier
"EASY MONEY," by Edgar Daniel Kramer

LOUISE RICE'S free service continues in her Department—

"WHAT HANDWRITING REVEALS"

Send her a sample of your writing and she will tell you your best qualifications, and give you some good helpful advice.

POLICE-CAPTAIN HOWARD

will have a special article of unusual interest in the next issue, and there will be a number of fascinating short items that will please you.

THE EDITOR.

The LOCK and KEY

by Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

IN the dim twilight of the shop's interior was a tall, distinguished stranger with slivery hair who bent, peering at a tray of emeralds put forward for his inspection by a deferential clerk.

The clerk had never seen him before, but this customer, evidently, knew something about stones—and he would pay cash.

But his taste in jewels was a fastidious one. One after another, pouring them through his slim fingers, his slow headshake rejected as weighed in the balance and found wanting many beautiful brilliants. He seemed to say that this or that was just short of perfection by the fineness of a hair.

The clerk, in a fever of anxiety, moistened his stiff lips. He was, as it happened, just a substitute, taken on during the vacation of Felix Ostrander, the firm's best salesman, and second to none in the Metropolis as an appraiser of fine stones.

"Ah, if Mr. Ostrander were only here," he said suddenly, "doubtless, sir, he would be able to show you something that might interest you. But, ah!"

Abruptly he turned backward in the dimness, his exploring fingers searching in a black velvet tray whereon reposed a queen's ransom in emeralds. All were AA1 gemstones, not a DA or a DB in the lot, which is the trade designation for jewels inferior to the finest by a shade.

The clerk's back could not have been turned more than a scant ten seconds. It was hard upon closing time, and there was no one in that part of the shop save the clerk and his fastidious customer with the silvery hair. Now, turning with the tray, the clerk on a sudden felt the strain and the warmth of the summer day; the customer felt it, too—his long, delicate hand going to his forehead in a quick, flicking gesture beneath his hat.

But in the split-second that the clerk had turned his back those slim, facile fingers had moved, hovering over the counter with the speed of light. He turned now, with his slow headshake, and a murmured

"Umm, of the first water, certainly; but I think not today."

Raising his hat with a stiff, ceremonious, Old-World courtesy, the tall man with the silvery hair had gone, moving slowly outward to the street. The clerk, with his

glance upon that tray, saw nothing wrong; there were the jewels, glowing with the dull fires of chrysoprase, chalcedony, tourmaline, beryl, emerald, precious and semi-precious, each in its place. And while not equal in value to that other tray with its queen's ransom of stones, still it was valuable; as loot it would have netted a light-fingered thief a hundred thousand clear.

The clerk, carrying that tray back to the safe, paused, for the merest instant, under the fierce blazing of a white-hot arc; its hooded brilliance shone down upon the stones with the pitiless white light of truth.

Then he gave a gasping croak.

For an even half-dozen of those stones —prices, in the aggregate, at $50,000—had vanished! Or, rather, palmed smoothly by an expert hand, they had been replaced by paste!

CHAPTER TWO

ON the morning following the theft Felix Ostrander, returning from his vacation to his honored place in the great jewelry house of Gutelius, looked up from the examination of a rare cabochon sent from the famous lapidary Lalique to meet a pair of eyes, dark, expressive, under lowered brows.

PETER ROBINSON
Private Investigator

he read from the card placed before him on the counter. Ostrander smiled, then with a quick frown he placed the ruby which he had been examining under a strong glass upon a square of velvet. Turning to the detective with what in another man would have been brusqueness—in Ostrander it was merely a brief, studied coldness, calculated to repell—he said:

"You have come in the matter of the stolen emeralds? Well, there is nothing that I can tell you, really, Mr. Robinson," he said softly. "Nothing—that is the sum of my knowledge. But Meunier, my substitute, has put me in possession of the facts. Ah, Meunier!" he called, and the clerk who had waited upon the stranger with the silvery hair came forward, smiling nervously and rubbing his hands.

"Yes," he said, in reply to the question of the detective, "I remember the man well. No, I am certain that I had never seen him before. No, he was not a young man. Why do you ask? Plainly middle-aged—even old."

He ceased, his eyes upon the carpet with a brief, fugitive glimmer; they were everywhere at once, never still; they did not meet the eyes of the detective for longer than a quick, flashing instant, and away.

For a moment or two the investigator held him in converse. Attired as a typical man-about-town, gardenia in his buttonhole, cane hooked over his arm, Peter Robinson was scarcely the sort of man one would expect in the conventional detective. Certainly there was nothing in his manner calculated to overawe.

But Robinson was anything but a conventional detective; he was distinctly unconventional both in habit and thought.

He listened to Meunier now, his gaze dreamy, abstracted, seeming to see nothing, scarcely to hear. The salesman obviously was glad to be finished with his questioner. And at the detective's "Well, I think that's all, and thank you," he seemed fairly to run outward through the door to the street.

But Robinson paid him no heed, turning to Ostrander where he stood. The investigator's fingers, as if idly moving, had slid along the polished wood, lifting and closing to a fist, then opening again an inch from his long nose.

"Ah, may I?" he said, indicating the jeweler's glass with which Ostrander had been busy. The detective, screwing the glass to his eye, appeared as if trying to look through the palm of his hand. He smiled, returning the magnifying-glass across the counter.

"My dear Mr. Ostrander," he said easily, "do you believe in signs? Straws are supposed to show the direction of the wind, do they not? And as between the commission of a crime and the detection thereof it

is sometimes a case of the stupidity of the criminal rather than the detective's cleverness, don't you think? But we must not split hairs!"

For a moment Ostrander regarded the detective with a peculiar look, then he smiled the tolerant, skeptical smile of a man who, putting his trust in locks and bars, has little hope and less confidence in recovering that which locks and bars had not been sufficient to protect.

He bowed a deep, Continental bow, and the investigator, his eyes bright, a thoughtful cast to his firm mouth, departed without further speech. But once in his flat and in his study, he pressed a buzzer and a man appeared. He was short and thickset, with a face that would have been villainous, scarred and scabbed with lately-healed cicatrices and pocked blue with powder-burns. His eyes, faithful, true, were fixed upon his master now in a dumb devotion that spoke plainer than speech.

"Hinch, here's a list of a dozen places. I want you to visit each of them and report here tonight. Now, with the sample I've given you, you can't go wrong. But watch your step."

He bent, turning to the examination of a something in his hand, a something at which, as the outer door closed upon the faithful Hinch, he smiled, replacing the microscope upon its stand.

For the objects upon which he gazed, as he had picked them up from the jewelry counter in Gutelius's, were two curling, silvery hairs.

CHAPTER THREE

THE usual police machinery had been set in motion following the theft; Peter Robinson had been called in later in the day.

The investigator would have preferred otherwise, but now, comfortably ensconced in a wing chair in his study, he carefully tabulated the facts in his mind. First, as to possible suspects, on the theory of possible collusion:

Felix Ostrander. Ostrander had been with the firm for twenty years; he was in a way a junior partner; he was the owner of much real estate; a bachelor, and a member of a number of prominent clubs. Aside from any possible secret reason, motive there was none. He was worth at the most conservative estimate five hundred thousand. And the stones had been valued, at the most, at nearly seventy-five.

Ferdinand Gutelius. A millionare many times over.

The investigator, dismissing these two with a mental shrug, turned to the consideration of

Alphonse Meunier. The substitute clerk was poor, married, but he had been seen occasionally in the company of shady characters, loose women; also, he had been known to lose money on the races. And, following his departure from the jewelry-shop, he had not gone home! But he was a young man, and his hair was black, as was Ostrander's!

The investigator must wait for the report of his assistant before proceeding further. Fingerprints had been taken, as a matter of course, but the detective considered this only as confusing the trail. It would be something more than fingerprints, he was certain, to bring the criminal to book.

On a sudden impulse, and leaving a note for Hinch, the investigator, summoning a taxi, visited first a certain real estate office; after that a bank. Then giving the driver a street and a number, at which the latter stared, he alighted finally in a dim backwater of the city's traffic, little West Twelfth street.

By now it was coming on to evening, but the street lamps had not been lit. Robinson, standing a moment upon the curb, had seen, out of the tail of his eye, another taxi. It was idling slowly along the curb, its driver bent forward over the wheel. That taxi had been following him from the moment of his departure from his flat in the West 70's. Now, as the investigator turned, going up the steps of a brick house on the corner, above him there came the stealthy lifting of a shade. The driver of

that taxi in the street below put out his hand. The detective, his hand upon the bronze knocker of the door, heard from behind it the quick pad-pad of feet.

The pursuing taxi was nearer now, and in it, behind the half-drawn shade, there appeared, all at once, a hand, slim-fingered and white. But the investigator, following his rap, stood leaning upon his cane as with the groaning of a bolt the door fell inward and a voice, hoarse with a kind of grating snarl, came at him out of the blackness:

"Well, what do you want?"

The investigator, with his foot between the casing and the door, spoke for a moment rapidly out of the corner of his mouth in the prison twist. Then:

"Oh, all right," said the voice. "Well, come in!"

Robinson, entering, heard the thick door close behind him and the sound of a heavy bolt. Glancing about the narrow hall, he went forward now, following his guide, to find himself after a moment in a lofty room, the long windows with their iron shutters tight-closed, the floor covered with the thick pile of rugs in which his foot-falls sank and were muffled, as if he walked on wool.

Turning to the officer now, the man who had admitted him—a tall, shambling figure with a pink, hairless face save for the light eyebrows and a faint stubble of beard—moistened his thin lips. He spoke in a harsh whisper:

"Well, what have you got?" he said.

The investigator, as it happened, had known all about this house. It was perhaps the one clearing-house for stolen goods not known to the police. And the "fence" who ran it, if this man was the fence—mentally the investigator supplied him with silvery hair, a high hat and a cane—but no, the thing was obviously absurd.

He spoke now in the quick, pattering argot of the underworld:

"I just did a lamas from the 'Pen'—get me, old-timer? I'm not ready yet, but I will be in two, three days. Now, I'm workin' for a good boss—see? An' I got me a commission to *buy*—get me? Emeralds, if you know of any. Well, what do you say?"

The bald-headed man favored him with a quick, grinning appraisal. The look, the tone, the speech—all had been admirably done; the cane, the modish suit, made little difference; Robinson would have deceived, as it happened, anybody—except the bald-headed man with the slow, sneering smile.

But the latter, turning with his fixed, mirthless grin, fumbling a moment in a wall safe at his back, withdrew his hand. It came forward now, palm out, and there, blazing in the semi-dusk beneath the light, were six stones.

"Emeralds!" said the bald-headed man. The investigator drew in his breath with a quick, hissing inspiration. Knowing stones as he did, he was aware, scarcely beyond the possibiity of a doubt, that here was the loot.

"Well, how much?" he asked, his face impressive as an Indian's.

But as he spoke, for the first time there was born in his mind a doubt, a brief, passing unease. Why, if these were indeed the stones stolen from the jewelry-shop, had the bald-headed man with the satiric, grim smile disclosed them? Unless——

Glancing around the room, with its high ceiling, its windows with shutters of sheet steel, the door, plainly of steel—in effect, a fort—the detective heard, all at once, the answer to his question; it came, with a quick, hissing sibilance, like the hissing of a snake:

"How much? More than you can figure to pay, young fellow, and you can lay to that!"

There was a menace in the words, and more than a menace. The investigator, his eyes upon the cold ones upturned to his, knew it, in the moment that he knew that the man facing him there in that secret chamber realized it, that he, Peter Robinson, was not all he seemed. And in that room, with its sound-proof walls and shuttered windows, a cry for help, say, would be lost as a stone is lost—dropped into dim waters of oblivion. He stiffened, his hand going to the automatic in his pocket as, abruptly, without sound, a pair of hands, clawlike, went round his neck. There came a sudden,brief explosion of movement, then

he felt himself sliding, slipping down and down, as something burst in his brain with a stinging crash—then silence and darkness, with, as he fancied as oblivion swept over him like a sea, the faint echo of the one word:

"Fool!"

CHAPTER FOUR

HINCH, Peter Robinson's assistant, with the list that his employer had given him in his pocket, sauntered slowly along the avenue, his sleepy-lidded gaze upon the shop-fronts to right and left. Of the places enumerated in that list there were not so very many—perhaps a dozen altogether—but the assistant must work fast. Time pressed, and here on the avenue the traffic had been this afternoon, if anything, more congested than usual. The assistant, oddly out of place in the throng of well-dressed shoppers, was shouldering his way onward with his clumping tread, when of a sudden out of the corner of his eye he sensed rather than saw the tall figure of a man in a frock-coat and a high silk hat, his dark, high-colored face turned for a moment backward upon the crowded street.

The man had disappeared into the high doorway of a shop just at the operative's right.

Hinch halted, or, rather, walking slowly now, he paused, glancing obliquely into that shop-window where, staring at him with eyes that saw nothing of the street without, wax figures, models, with their fixed, simpering stares, crowded the long plate-glass window. The assistant grinned sourly, then, flattening himself against a window a little to the right, waited—one minute, five. But the man in the frock-coat and high silk hat did not come out.

The operative waited, his sleepy-lidded glance, that was yet keen and sharp, upon that high-arched door—waited five minutes, ten, then, with a muttered oath, turned and entered the shop.

A clerk, a thin, pale creature with white hair and the pink eyes of an Albino, came forward, smiling and rubbing his hands; then he recoiled as the assistant, scowling, had brushed by him with an audible oath.

Then the operative stopped dead.

For the man in the high silk hat was nowhere about. The reason—and Hinch's grim smile lingered as he turned now to the clerk—was simple: the back door!

It was a side-door, really, leading to an alley at the right, a service entrance, but the man in the high silk hat had taken it. There could be no doubt of that.

"The manager!" snapped Hinch.

There would be no use in following the man in the high hat now. The operative at the advent of the manager spoke rapidly and low, the shield in his open palm, his calling card; the manager, however, could tell him little. As it was, his surprise was obviously real.

"Monsieur Ostrander, sir? One of our best customers—but surely! He buys perfumes—but yes! And of the most expensive! But——"

The shrugged shoulders, the lifted eyes were more eloquent than any speech.

And yet, as he turned outward to the golden afternoon, the operative, checking the list once more under the shade of an awning at the door, smiled thinly out of the corner of his mouth, and the smile this time was exultant, grim.

He had discovered what he wanted, or he thought that he had, but, to make assurance doubly sure, he would run down that list, at any rate the remaining two or three—all of those names would not be necessary, he was sure.

But it was when, drawing blank at the next three, he was issuing once more into the crowded street that he froze rigid where he stood.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MAN had stepped suddenly out of the hot sunlight into the shop; his shoulder, in passing, had grazed that of the detective as he had been coming out—a tall man in a high silk hat, beneath which, as

the operative saw, there was the shining of his silvery hair.

The hawk-like nose, the grim, brooding mouth, the eyes, chill, cold, almost with a menace in their depths—the detective saw, and, seeing, stifled a quick word in his throat.

For the man was of the same height and build as Ostrander, he was convinced. And yet the face was the same and yet not the same. It brought him abruptly to the right-about, to follow without apparent haste inward to the counters and the decorous quiet that was like an oasis of silence after the noisy street.

The operative had no proof, either that the man was Ostrander, or that he was anything but a casual customer there in the little shop. But he had that for which he had come, or he thought that he had—a clue, a thread—and now to follow the man with the silvery hair!

Hinch was an excellent operative—none better. At shadowing he was a gliding ghost. But the man with the silvery hair led him, walking as with seven-league boots, southward and west and again south, until, in a side street of the Roaring Forties, abruptly, between two ticks of the watch, at the corner of a narrow alley, he vanished as if he had never been.

For a moment the detective stood, staring the short length of the alley, head lowered, knees bent forward like a sprinter upon the mark; then all at once he saw him, the tall figure, like a shadow beneath the sun—he appeared and disappeared even as the detective had seen him.

Perhaps a half-minute had intervened between the disappearance of his quarry and the entrance of the detective into the little shop. And here again the simpering *poupees* met him with their fixed, frozen grins. And again, as his darkling glance swept the length of the small shop, the operative swore, deep in his throat.

Because, even as had the figure of Felix Ostrander vanished back there in the shop on the avenue, so now the tall man with the silvery hair was nowhere about.

The detective, standing in the doorway, beheld a series of narrow cubicles, glass-paneled. And even as he watched the door of one of these opened, and a man stepped out—passing him outward to the street with swift, soundless step.

He passed him so close that the detective could have touched him with scarcely the movement of a hand. This man, however, bore no resemblance to the silvery-haired customer whom he had just seen going in. And behind this man now there came another, obviously paunchy, undersized, fat; the two figures vanished in the street without even as the operative, at a plunging run, had yanked wide the closet doors, peering in each one, to find them empty.

He smiled sourly, deaf to the protestations of the bald-headed proprietor, turning outward now with the memory of the first man who had passed him, going to the street. He had seen the back of his head as he had gone forward, and it had not been silvery or even white, because it had been pink and bald.

CHAPTER SIX

HINCH, letting himself in with his night-key, found his employer's note, and with it another, a square of paper protruding from beneath the door; he had seen it as he snapped on the light. It was a telegram; the landlady had signed for it, as it appeared. Hinch, tearing it open, read, once, twice; then, a grim smile about his mouth, made ready, going to a drawer and taking therefrom a number of curious objects that looked like nothing so much as lemons as to shape; as to color, they were a dirty greenish-gray.

The telegram might be a trap; it most probably was; as a matter of fact, the assistant had little doubt of it, even though the message had read:

"Come quick 23 Little West Twelfth; ask for Mr. Delorme. ROBINSON."

The assistant grinned again, because he knew something that the sender of that telegram had not, and that was: between Peter

Robinson and his assistant no letters or messages were ever exchanged without a password or key, and that symbol was the little word "Start," twice repeated. This had been changed on occasion, for safety's sake, but the assistant could be trusted to remember. Presently now, his preparations made, he made speed for the brick house at the corner of Little West Twelfth street.

Who "Mr. Delorme" might be he did not know; anyway, it made little difference. But Hinch was acquainted with that house. Before his association with Peter Robinson he had been, as he was wont to term it, "on the other side." As a "houseman"—safe-blower—he had had few equals in the old time—but that was in the past.

It was now late, past nine o'clock. Hinch, leaving the elevated, did not approach that house by the front; instead he waited in a speak-easy distant a short block—waited, until upon the stroke of eleven he got up heavily from his seat, going outward into the night.

The assistant had not made the mistake of calling upon the police; the time was not ripe for that, and, besides, he knew well enough what would be the result of an assault in force upon that front door, even with plainclothes men drawn in a close cordon around the rear.

Nor did he, entering the maze of back-yards and alleys running the length of the long block, essay the conventionally burglarious entry by means of a jimmied window, either above or below. Instead—and he grinned in the darkness to see that it gave promise of a night, ink-black—he paused at a flat iron manhole in the passage at the rear, to take something out of his pocket that was like a jimmy. Bending, he inserted his lever in the cover, lifted it, and in a moment was coasting downward, to bring up short, presently, in the stuffy blackness of a room that was like a vault.

Moving with the stealth and caution of an Indian, after a moment he produced his pocket-flash, and the light danced, glimmering, upon the floor and wall. Then he went on, dousing the light, to feel before him in the darkness for the stair.

Up this he went, close to the wall, and walking on the balls of his feet, until, with his eye to the keyhole of a door, he listened, hearing nothing save the dim and distant ticking of a wall-clock.

The assistant knew well enough what it would mean if he were discovered. How many of them there might be there in that house he had no means of knowing, but, first of all, he must find where they had bestowed the investigator, if he were still alive. Opening the door inch by careful inch, he paused again, feeling before him in the darkness, but there came no sound, no sign.

And then, at a sudden murmur of voices, he froze, rigid, where he stood.

The voices appeared to come from behind him, and a little to his left. They were quick, eager tones, with now and then a laugh that sounded in the darkness like the voice of a hyena. With his ear close to the wall the assistant listened, as, after a moment, the words reached him on a low, ironic note:

"Clever—ha? You're sure clever, you imitation dick! But you're going to get yours, along with that stool-pigeon assistant of yours, in a holy minute! And if he brings the cops, it'll be all the quicker, and you can lay to that!"

The assistant, with his eye to the keyhole of the great double doors, saw under the shading of the single light three men, tigerish, hard-bitten. Before them, and with his back to the wall, and facing them with a grim, tight-lipped smile, was Robinson. He pulled at his mustache now with the old, inimitable gesture even as the assistant looked.

The fourth man—the one who had spoken—the assistant could not see clearly—only the back of his head, smooth, shiny, hairless, and his great ears. Presently this man, rising from his chair, turned to the three men with an oath:

"You, Frisco and Slim and Red—you needn't wait—see? Because the guy ain't coming, an' you can lay to that He's wise—see? Or he'd 'a' been here before this. Now—you've got the stones, Frisco—you watch your step!"

The assistant heard the scraping of

chairs, a muttered word, the slam of a door—and they were gone. Hinch had entertained the notion of cracking the safe, if the opportunity presented. But with that mention of the "stones," plainly, or at least it seemed plain enough, for some reason the keeper of the loot had decided to transfer it beyond risk.

The emeralds had been insured; he and his chief were looking for the man who had taken them; once found, their work would be accomplished. Through that keyhole now he saw something at which the short hairs at the back of his neck prickled as at the touch of an invisible, icy finger. The bald-headed man, his face like the face of a devil under the light, had risen. He leaned over his prisoner now, in his hand a great, long-bladed knife.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT was no time for hesitation. The assistant, his shoulder against those doors, felt the great leaves slide backward; he tugged, and the gap widened, without noise. Then, plunging through, as the knife-blade shot over and down, he struck, once, a lifting punch that landed just behind the man's ear.

The bald man stumbled, recovered, the knife drove into the wall and all at once his face went blank. He crashed downward to the rug as the assistant, working with the speed of a quick, desperate haste, cast loose the detective's bonds.

Then, for there might be others in the house, on tiptoe they gained the front door, unlocked it, peering into the street. But behind them there was silence—the silence of an empty house in the small hours; plainly there was no one there.

They turned then, going backward to where but a moment before the bald-headed man with the bristly stubble of beard had lain face downward upon the carpet. Then, the assistant, in the lead, stifled a quick word in his throat.

For the bald-headed man had vanished.

For a moment they gazed at each other in blank surprise. Then:

"Got away—clean!" Robinson whispered, peering into the shadows. His assistant, gun in hand, stood rigid as a rock; for a moment he stood silent, listening, holding his breath. But there came no further sound.

It was a queer business. For a moment, too, the investigator, as he stood there under the light, fancied that eyes were watching them, malignant, cruel, out of the dimness just beyond. And the silence held; it was fluid, like a dim tide of soundless flood.

In silence, then, they backed slowly outward to the door, in silence gained the street, and still in silence walked slowly the length of the long block.

There, at the corner of the street, they hailed a taxi, in which, as they rolled northward along the avenue, Robinson sat silent, musing, eyes half closed, cigarette a pinpoint of dull fire that waxed and waned to the slow suction of his breath.

"Well, Hinch, what do you make of it?" he asked at length. "A queer business—ha? And we're seeing it from the outside-in, of course."

"Uh-huh!" answered the assistant. "It's a queer turn, Chief, if you ask me. I don't remember a queerer! But that bald-headed crook—he's got more than a little to do with it, say from the *inside-out*, do you think?"

For a moment Peter Robinson made him no answer. The taxi had almost reached its destination when he spoke, yawning behind his hand:

"Well, it'll all come out in the—I was going to say 'wash,' but a little patience, Hinch, and we'll unwind the threads."

Again at the brick house in Little West Twelfth street there came a knocking at the door.

But this time it was the man with the silvery hair who opened it; the bald-headed man was nowhere in sight.

To the man who entered—tall, dark, but with a spot of color in his lean cheeks—the man with the silvery hair spoke in a low, almost a deferential note:

"Ah, my good friend, you came to me be-

cause I could not come to you! That is good—that is very good."

But there was nothing deferential in his gaze, the eyes unwinking under narrowed lids; and now, in the dimness, his voice hissed like a snake:

"The last time! Potz-t'ouzend! Have I not said it? You refused me—that was enough! And so took that which was mine! And now——"

He spread his hands wide in a little flicking gesture, his face on a sudden bleak under the lights.

"I have sent for you," he told the dark man, "to say that for ten thousand dollars, ten thousand paltry dollars, I was compelled to do that which I did, and all because of your refusal." His voice changed abruptly to a hoarse, snarling note; he spoke now in the argot of his environment:

"You wouldn't come across—ha? You, with your smug self-righteousness—pah! You give me a pain! Sitting pretty—and me battering for my three squares, without a Chinaman's chance to come through! But I made it—ha! You see me! And I sent for you to say that it'll be fifty grand this time, old-timer, and you can lay to that!"

He paused, while his visitor lifted a slim, shaking hand. He spoke now in a strained whisper, his face pallid against the lights.

"You cannot have it, Nicolai," he said. "I haven't got it to give! And if I had"—he paused, a tic at the corner of his mouth jerking with a slack violence—"if I had, I should not give it to you! Nicolai, you go too far!"

The silvery-haired man laughed shortly, without mirth.

"I haven't gone half far enough, you penny-pinching tight-wad," he made answer. "But if you want to save yourself a little vacation in 'stir' you'd better do as I say. That fifty grand—you'll be getting good value for it, my esteemed friend, and I promise you this: it'll be the last time—the last! Because I am going away, do you hear? Going away—away from all this!" He made a sweeping gesture, all-embracing; his eyes glowed, deep down, with a pin-point of light, like a still fire. "And I promise you, upon my sacred honor"—he grinned fleetingly—"that it will be the last."

His visitor made a slight movement of the hand. His mouth tightened. Evidently he had come to a decision. He took one forward, sudden stride, his eyes level with the face of the tall man with the silvery hair.

"I'll see you in hell first, Nicolai," remarked the dark man, cool and quiet. "And that's my final answer! Now I'm through!"

For a moment in the eyes of the man called Nicolai there showed on a sudden a quick, wolfish gleam. His visitor had turned, was going; in a moment he would be gone. His back turned now to the man with the silvery hair, he did not see the sudden stab of the long fingers, the broad blade of the knife.

A moment it hung poised, the long, razor-sharp steel leveled at his back; then it slid back to its place as the dark man, with the speed of light, whirling, had caught the other's wrist in a quick, bruising grip.

"Ah!" he said. "So! Now, in Poland, for instance, they would have known how to deal with you, hireling of the left hand! But here—I do not know."

His voice rose suddenly to a high, frenzied pitch:

"Ah, you have done your best to ruin me, Nicolai!"

He paused again, his dark, high-colored face sharpened to a point of hate:

"But in Poland they would have known what to do with you, for in Poland it would be a short shift and a long rope, Nicolai—thou knowest!"

His speech changed all at once to the quick, hissing syllables of his native tongue.

"Ay—thou knowest; by the blood of God, Nicolai, you have gone too far! And not a ruble will I give you. Do what you will! For I was willing, as I said, and more than willing, that you should have your chance, but you would not. Therefore look you to it!"

He swung on his heels, was gone, but as he closed and bolted the heavy door the man called Nicolai smiled—a thin, brooding smile that was like a benediction re-

versed. So might Satan have looked, after the Fall.

He turned, and at his quick, hissing whisper there came a fumbling scurry from the shadows at the rear—a man, pale-faced, with a wedge-shaped chin, fingers fluttering in the dimness, came forward, to speak in a hoarse whisper, behind his hand:

"He's gone, Chief? Yo' sh'd have croaked him, sure. Now it'll be the bulls, you'll see. But we've got time, Chief; there ain't a thing to do."

The man with the silvery hair frowned darkly at the locked and bolted door.

"Don't worry, Spike," he said slowly. "Our late visitor has—ah—reasons why he would not call in the police. But I could kill him, the smug, canting hypocrite!" His tones rose to a sudden, savage pitch. "I've made him pay, and I'll make them all pay, Spike, and we'll be sitting pretty. Then it'll be time to blow. Now as to that smart aleck Robinson, he can't do much. You've followed my instructions, of course. And it goes as it 'lays.'"

He gestured outward with one slim, strong hand. The man called Spike vanished in the shadows at the rear. The man with the silvery hair, reaching up, snapped out the light.

Once more in his apartment following their departure from the house in Little West Twelfth Street, Peter Robinson, facing his helper across the table, took stock.

"That was careless of me, I admit, but—well—it won't happen again," he said, turning to a list of names and addresses furnished him by Hinch. "As I see it, the robbery was—and was *not*—an inside job; it was committed by a man with silvery hair, but without wrinkles, who had plenty of money but who was in need of it; a man who knew stones, especially emeralds, but—and here is the thing that he could not escape: he *had* to dispose of those stones—and for cash. Well, who *was* he, do you think?"

His gaze, sleepy-laden, rested upon the assistant and away.

"Boss, who do *I* know?"

Hinch answered his question with another; then, abruptly, he sat bolt upright in his seat.

"Sounds like a riddle, the way you put it," he continued, "but are you certain that he got the cash?"

His gaze, like a lance of light, rested upon the detective as Peter Robinson, with a grim chuckle, favored him with an approving nod.

"As a matter of fact, I have good reason for supposing that he *didn't*," he said. "You see, I omitted to mention in my diagnosis that our man was not a *professional* crook; he was desperate, however, and he had to have the cash. He knew that 'fence,' as it happened, because he and the said 'fence' were countrymen. He had had certain transactions with him before, *by the left hand;* but that didn't prevent the 'fence' from double-crossing him—always supposing that I am correct."

He paused as there came a knocking at the door, and by this time it was morning, and the city waking for the day, the morning paper showed on a sudden through the crack beneath. The boy who had delivered it had gone onward, whistling, as the assistant picked it up, glancing at a double-column spread; it stared out at him as Robinson's voice went on:

"Well, as it happens, I know the thief—I'd know him among a thousand, and his name is——"

"Alphonse Meunier!" exploded Hinch, passing the paper to his Chief. There it was, in black and white:

GUTELIUS GEM-THIEF ARRESTED—SUAVE ROBBER IN THE TOILS—MEUNIER CONFESSES.

"Well!" exclaimed Peter Robinson. "What do you know about that? The substitute. Lord, what an ass a man will make of himself now and again."

But whether the reflection was directed at himself or at the man whose name, blazoned across the page, stared out at them in double-leaded type, was not quite clear.

He laughed gently.

"Well, you see, Hinch, my main reason in visiting that house in Little West Twelfth Street was because the thief, if he were still without the money, would inevitably make another try to sell the stones to the 'fence.'"

He glanced briefly at the newspaper as there came a quick step in the hall without; the door-man, following his knock, put in his head. As if oblivious of his presence, the detective, his hand upon the newspaper, continued: "Meunier, however, is not the thief. He *couldn't* be, Hinch, because, I tell you, the man who stole those emeralds is, beyond the shadow of a doubt——"

The door-man's announcement echoed in the narrow hall:

"Mister Ferdinand Gutelius!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE great Gutelius, a fat, bald man, verging upon middle-age, came in, puffing from his climb. The flat-house was what is known as a "walk-up." Robinson had had his reasons for selecting it in preference to one having an elevator; for one thing, as he expressed it, "it discouraged bores." But at the entry of the jeweler he swept the paper beneath a pile of books, turning to his visitor with a smile and a wave of the hand.

"Ach!" exclaimed the lapidary. "These stairs. Teufel! But they are high and steep."

He sat down heavily, at Robinson's invitation, his face, with its little eyes, peering at the investigator in a kind of sightless stare. A moment he sat, lacing and unlacing his long fingers; then, abruptly, without further speech he turned to the operative.

"Mister Robinson," he said thickly, a pulse in his temple jerking with a quick violence, "I vant that you should abandon the case. You will be paid, and well paid, I do assure you. Anything, sir, in reason—anything. Name your own price and you may have it."

His hand, going to his pocket, produced his checkbook. Peter Robinson surveyed him in a frozen calm.

"Your request is—ah—a trifle unusual, Mr. Gutelius," he made answer coldly. "At this stage most especially, I should say. And I shall ask nothing but the fee agreed upon, I promise you."

He paused for the merest instant, his unruffled poise in strong contrast to the jeweler's agitation. If this were a bribe—and it looked a good deal like it—the investigator's implied rebuke had for the moment silenced the jeweler, but only for a moment. His voice, when he spoke now, was thick, eager, imploring, reverting to his native speech in a queer mixture of English and bastard Polish-French.

"No, no, no!" he cried. "Ve haf found—ah—potz-t'ouzend, meinherr, I shall be ruined if I go on—is it not the fact?"

He spread his hands wide in a quick, continental gesture. Peter Robinson silenced him with hand uplifted.

"I have found the thief, sir," he said.

For a moment Gutelius could only stare. Then, with a queer, croaking sound that was in effect a shriek, he got nimbly to his feet, turned and had flung wide the door. For an instant they had a glimpse of a death-gray face, strained and old; then, plunging down the steep flight, he was gone. Robinson turned to his assistant with a thoughtful frown.

"A queer case, Hinch, but I have almost all the threads," he said quietly. "Because a clue is a thread, isn't it, and this clue curled, and I found its end very quickly. But there is still much to be done. In a way it has been a sort of labyrinth, but in a labyrinth, as you should know, the way out is easy if you possess the clue."

He paused, as there came the trill of the desk-phone; taking the receiver from the hook, he listened as the voice came, sharp and quick:

"Little West Twelfth—yes—they're all there, but getting ready for the getaway. We've got the house covered, front and back — yes — now burn the wind, and *hurry.*"

CHAPTER NINE

A TALL man in a glossy silk tile and a frock coat, trousers creased to a knife-edge of perfection, came walking briskly along Little West Twelfth Street.

He was an arresting figure, with his erect, military carriage, shoulders broad and somehow youthful, save for the face, which was clean-shaven and hard, eyes hawk-like under lowered lids. It was not a young face, nor was it mellowed, as it should have been by the crowning distinction of his silvery-gray hair.

Pausing before a brick house on the corner, he stood for a moment on the sidewalk, his cane tap-tapping on the stone, his gaze upon the empty, echoing thoroughfare, save where, down the long block, a taxi had swung round the corner, its engine throttled down to a mere idling crawl.

The tall man with the silvery hair turned, then, making an almost imperceptible movement with his cane, he ran lightly up the steps of the brick house and in at the door. But once inside the man with the silvery hair, his hand upon the knob, turned with a swift, tigerish leap upon a dim figure that came from the shadows.

"You, Frisco? That damn dick, Robinson, is on our backs. We've got to work fast? Now, we're all set, and we're leaving 'em holding the bag."

He spoke out of the corner of his mouth, yet with a faint, underlying suggestion of a foreign tang, a lengthening of the r's and a precise, hissing sibilance. The man called Frisco, short and broad, with a seamed, lead-colored face, turned to where another man, suitcase in hand, came forward out of the shadows. The suitcase was heavy. It clinked and rattled. The second man, swinging it upward to his shoulder, spoke in a husky, asthmatic guttural.

"Well, boss, we're all set," he declared. "It's all here; now it's up to you."

The man with the silvery hair for a moment did not answer, standing rigid, silent, as if listening, his head turned sidewise to the window and the wall. Under the single light his face seemed somehow satanic, brooding, an effect heightened by the dignified frock-coat, the hat, in an indescribable air of breeding debased.

Going to the window with its steel curtain, he looked for a moment through a peep-hole to the street; then, with a snarl, turning, he gestured backward to the shadows; the man with the suitcase disappeared.

Abruptly the man with the silvery hair laughed, but without mirth.

"The fool," he said. "The sanctimonious, canting fool. He'd give me another chance, would he? Call off the bloodhounds, would he?" For a moment he muttered something in a patois that was like the hissing of a snake. Then, moving forward with a swift, cat-like step, he followed the short man with the bag.

Alphonse Meunier, sweated to a fare-you-well by a third-degree which had left him white-faced, babbling, had "confessed." Peter Robinson could not have prevented it. The police had stepped in, as usual, with methods that were less inspired than autocratic, and between the operative and the official guardians of the law there had always existed a certain unfriendly lack of co-operation. But with Inspector Haggerty that was a different matter.

The Chief of the Detective Bureau had always been his friend; he it had been who had telephoned the investigator following the departure of Ferdinand Gutelius; and now, meeting Robinson and his assistant in that service alley behind the brick house with its steel window-aprons, the inspector, his manner brisk, assured, had greeted the investigator with:

"Well now, Peter, we've got 'em—like that."

He had opened and closed one capable, strong hand, turning curiously to the operative with a frank, admiring glance.

"Did they teach it to you in college, Peter, or did you just pick it up?" he asked, his grin hidden in the shadows as, at their backs, the first of the plainclothes men showed for a moment at the alley's mouth.

Peter Robinson smiled faintly in answer, as, on a sudden from the street beyond there came the shattering swift thunder of steel

on clanging iron; the two men turned, racing for the rear wall just ahead.

CHAPTER TEN

LIP lifting above his strong white teeth like a trapped animal, the man with the silvery hair, his dark face like the face of a devil, raised his automatic, the white faces of the yeggmen at his back.

Then, as in through a window at the rear there showed for a moment the face of the investigator, peering into the gloom, the automatic whipped upward like a striking snake.

By now the attack in force from the street had ended with the crashing inward of the heavy door. But even as there showed in the dim hallway the gleam of the brass buttons the investigator shouted:

"Back, get back!" he yelled. Then, as the man with the silvery hair had pressed the trigger, the operative's hand, holding that grayish-green object, lemon-shaped, had lifted, swung. There came a sudden puff, a burst, a stench rising, acrid, overpowering, as the silvery-haired man, behind him the others in a common doom, lurched, staggered, collapsed; then, upon the instant, oblivion rolled over them like a sea. The gasbombs had done their work.

The man with the silvery hair, propped against the wall, had kept a sullen silence, facing the investigator where he stood. Now, however, at a sudden commotion at the door, he straightened. His face took on a sudden mottled, unhealthy gray, as, in at the entrance, between two broad-shouldered patrolmen, came Ferdinand Gutelius. Behind him, and at the sight Robinson's eyes widened in a quick stare of sudden triumph, there showed abruptly a white, tragic face. It twitched with a strange, cringing terror, as the silvery-haired man's grim glance met him full.

It was Felix Ostrander.

For a moment a little silence held, like the silence before a storm. Then, as the investigator made a quick forward step, there came a sharp cry from Gutelius.

"Ach! So! My poor Felix!" He turned to Ostrander with a wave of the hand; then round upon the operative with a little, darting rush. "I haf tried to shield him, I admit, for, indeed, he needed not the money, gentlemen. I do not understand it, I confess. I would have given him the worth of it twenty times over. But, for me, already it is forgotten, gentlemen. Come, Felix, shall we go?"

Peter Robinson lifted a restraining hand.

"Just a moment, Mr. Gutelius," he said. "As a matter of fact, for a moment I was sure that it had been Mr. Ostrander, but he had nothing to do with it, really."

He paused, while a murmur ran round the circle; from the tall man with the silvery hair came a sort of speaking sneer. Ostrander, still strangely pale, his face averted, stood with Gutelius as Robinson's voice went on.

"There were three silvery hairs, gentlemen, and the crook *is* about Mr. Ostrander's height and build. Under the microscope I found the hairs to be false and dyed."

He paused again, his glance briefly upon Ostrander, then away.

"My assistant, Mr. Hinch, verified that it was an easy matter, because he found, first, that Ostrander here had made a purchase of false hair just prior to a somewhat similar purchase by another gentleman. That was why we suspected him at first, until we found——"

There came a sudden gasp, as Hinch had made a quick, darting thrust to snatch at Ostrander's thick mop of curly black hair.

"Until we found that Ostrander's was *black*—ha?"

The assistant's voice rose, triumphant, in the silent room. Peter Robinson made a brief, clucking sound with his tongue, of apology, of disapproval and of something more. Ostrander, his face purple, stood there revealed, and he was absolutely bald. His face was the face of the bald-headed man, the "fence"!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THERE came a thick silence, tense and strained, through which after a moment the voice of Gutelius rose to a wail:

"Ach! That it should be."

Peter Robinson alone preserved an unruffled calm.

"I'm sorry," said the investigator, "and I apologize for the zeal of my assistant here, but for purposes of comparison, since it has been done, 'look here upon this picture and on this'!"

With a quick, nimble leap he was upon the tall man with the silvery hair; there came a lifting wrench, a twist, and he, too, upon the instant stood revealed in a pink and shiny baldness, as the assemblage looked, then looked again.

For between the two—Ostrander and him of the hair that had been silver—there was no point of difference save as to the eyes.

"You see," explained the investigator, "it was not so very difficult, after all. They might be brothers, as in fact they are. But Mr. Ostrander is innocent; we know that now. But this other crook here against the wall—ah, gentlemen, he has other names, and he's been a bad actor in all of them, and we'll call him the Gray Mouse, for that is the only one the police know. Well, he had been blackmailing Mr. Ostrander here, and Mr. Ostrander's a bit sensitive as to his family name. Our friend, the Mouse, knew that his brother had been away on his vacation, and he knows jewels. None better. He put on that silvery wig, walked right in, secured the stones by his little trick of substitution—it's the easiest thing he does—and walked right out again. And if it hadn't been that a dyed wig will shed hair—a hair, a thread, a clue, as it so chanced—we'd have been none the wiser. As it is, I fancy we can call it a day's work."

ESCAPED CONVICT PHONES PRISON

JOSEPH SPERDUTO, 18 years old, got back under the thumb of prison discipline recently after a night of freedom. He got back of his own free will, after escaping successfully.

Sperduto was one of a gang of trusties preparing Camp Smith at Peekskill for the coming of national guard regiments. Saturday work was finished and the gang was sitting around. Sperduto wandered off into the woods and while losing himself physically in the dense foliage he lost himself mentally from the galling yoke of confinement. And he did not recall himself to reality until he had missed the roll call.

Abruptly his contentment changed to consternation. He was afraid to go back to face punishment for being late. After several starts back toward the prison camp, and an equal number of retracings of his footsteps, he turned in panic and fled to the road. A truck rolled by. He jumped aboard and several hours later, in the dead of the night, found himself in New York.

His prison uniform was not conspicuous in the blackness, but nevertheless every approaching footstep sounded like a prison guard to Sperduto. He found his way to his relatives, but still the fear of capture haunted him. Together with a friend he wandered out again. And after pacing the streets he decided to go back.

He went into a drugstore and called the prison on the telephone. Warden Lawes was out—hunting for him—so he waited and called again. The warden was still out, but on the third call he asked for Head Keeper Thomas McInerney, told him where he was and arranged to be met in front of the Criminal Courts building.

He was there when they came for him, and he went back with them.

Clue: One Hairpin

By HOWARD PHILIP RHOADES

JOHN HARLOW'S blue eyes gleamed and his ruddy face shone with exultation as he held up a black hairpin. "Here, professor," he said in a low, eager voice. "At last here's something that looks like a clue!"

Prof. Elbert Carr, the psychologist, who had been called from his home on Morningside Drive to the home of a wealthy bachelor friend who had been mysteriously murdered, looked at the detective curiously.

He stepped over, took the hairpin from the other man and examined it. It was no different from the millions of such small, black, glistening, bent pieces of wire to be found in every boudoir, on every notion-counter. Professor Carr could not suppress a smile.

"But a hairpin!" he began; "I'm afraid it's about as good a clue as a pea in a ten-acre field of peas."

"No," said Harlow—"a pea in a ten-acre field of beans!"

"You mean——"

"This was a masculine household. There was your friend, Jordan Vane, who has been murdered. There was Stands, his butler. No woman lived here. Hence, if we find the woman who brought in the pin, we may find——"

"But, my dear Harlow, you didn't know about Vane. You say you did some industrial work for him, and his attorney called you in on this. But probably you always saw him at his office. You didn't know his home life."

The broad, open-faced detective, who looked very much like an alert business man, nodded his head. He looked questioningly at the reserved, studious-appearing Professor Carr, with his black Van Dyke and his dark, piercing eyes.

"No," the detective admitted, "I'd never called on Vane at home. But why——"

Professor Carr shook his head sadly.

"It may have been a woman," he said. "But *which* woman?"

"Then——"

"Jordan Vane was a good fellow at heart; generous, well-meaning, but weak. His weakness was toward women. There would be no knowing how many love affairs he had indulged in within the last year alone. In his lifetime—— No, Mr. Harlow, finding the woman by the best clue would be difficult. Finding her through an article as common to all women as a hairpin would be—well—impossible!"

For answer Harlow dropped on his knees at the point whence he had picked up the hairpin. "A speck of powder," he murmured. "As if it had been at one end of the hairpin, and had been ground into the floor by a heel."

"Probably your heel or mine," said Carr. "I think you're wrong, Mr. Harlow, on this hairpin clue. Let me make a suggestion. The thing that held Vane and me together was our mutual interest in psychology. But Vane leaned toward mysticism. He loved things which bordered on the occult. That, then, is the direction in which we should search."

Harlow smiled.

"There I'll differ with you, Professor," he said earnestly. "My success, such as it has been, is founded on the one principle: primarily human beings are animals. There is the spiritual side, of course. But it doesn't deprave. If you want to know what makes men and women offenders against the law I'll tell you. It is the instincts of the physical body. Hence study

the bodily instincts and crime will be an open book."

Harlow spoke with such conviction that, try as he would, Carr could not banish a picture of Jordan Vane, handsome, wealthy, gifted, turning his back upon his opportunities to give himself over to sensual pleasures. Fewer of their old-time studious, meditative evenings, more and more mad parties, until the Professor had rebelled, and started a fight to save Vane—a fight which ended vainly.

Carr shook his head. He asked:

"They were taking the body away as I arrived. What has been learned so far?"

"I came just before you," said Harlow. "As yet I have only what the police gave me. It seems Vane returned to his apartment early last night with a girl as dinner guest. Soon afterward he sent his butler Stands on an errand. Stands got back early this morning and found Vane lying dead on a couch in the living-room, shot through the head.

"Could it have been suicide?"

"Hardly; the bullet went into the back of the head."

"The revolver?"

"Missing."

"Vane was alone here for a time with the woman he was entertaining?"

"Yes; I'm just going to question Stands, the butler. Will you remain?"

George Stands, the butler, was found engaged in kitchen work.

"Our maid, who lives out, hasn't appeared this morning," he explained. "You wanted to see me? Yes, sir." Stands was a tall, lean man, partly bald, who stared at them with a worried, nervous look, and who seemed eager to answer all questions.

"Was it unusual for me to be sent away from the apartment?" he asked. "Not at all, sir. Frequently when Mr. Vane had a lady guest for dinner he'd have me prepare things, then he'd send me away and serve himself. I'd come back early next morning, as I did in this case."

"Where did you go last night?"

"To Mr. Vane's factory in Jersey City. They work a night shift there. The first time he ever sent me I pointed out that a messenger would do as well. But I soon saw he wanted to be rid of me, so I said no more. I usually dropped in to see friends on the way back, giving me the effect of a night off."

"What time did you leave last night?"

"A little after eight."

"Who was with Mr. Vane then?"

"A lady named Miss Duvall. That's her picture on the table."

Harlow picked up a silver frame containing the photograph of a strikingly pretty brunette. Pensively his finger touched the reproduction of the girl's long, dark tresses: "Where does she live?" he asked.

"Mr. Vane called her at the Hotel Prince Edward."

"When you left was there any one else here?"

Stands hesitated. Then he said:

"Yes, Katie Olmacher, the maid, was here. On evenings when Mr. Vane wanted dinner at home I kept her to help. Then she'd come later in the morning. But today she hasn't appeared."

"Where does she live?"

Stands mentioned an address on Amsterdam avenue. Harlow pursued: "Was there any one else here, Stands, when you left besides Mr. Vane, Miss Duvall and the maid?"

"No—not inside."

"Outside, then. Who was outside?"

"A young man named Alberty Reedy, who goes with Katie, the maid, was waitnig for her in the hall. When she's late he comes for her."

"What sort of a chap is he?"

"He's about twenty-five, and dark like a foreigner. He works for some kind of a lady's dressmaking place, I've heard. He seems to me a little—a trifle sissy, if you know what I mean, sir."

Harlow looked at the butler sharply. "Did Mr. Vane," he asked—"did Mr. Vane ever—did he ever have anything to say to the women servants. This girl, Katie, I mean. Did he ever pay her attentions?"

Stands batted his eyes nervously, and stammered:

"Well, now, sir—that is," and finished

with a gulping effort: "Not that I know of, sir."

"That's all, then."

Harlow gazed for a moment after the butler, then rose abruptly.

"There are some places I must go at once," he said. "I would be very glad of your company, Professor, if you care to come along."

"I will consider it a privilege," said Professor Carr.

The man on duty in the lobby of the hall building on Edgecombe avenue, in which the Vane apartment was situated, said the night hall-boy would not be back until evening. They noted his address, called a taxi, and proceeded across the great viaduct spanning the Harlem River and the lowlands beside it. Presently they came into a street of drab, gloomy apartments.

The colored hall-boy, in a dark, stifling room, still recounted to wide-eyed people of his own race the story of the murder. Harlow sized him up as a simple-minded youth likely to tell the truth. Having made the proper diplomatic advances with a bill, the detective started to question.

"Who came or went from Mr. Vane's apartment last night after Mr. Vane arrived with Miss Duvall?" he asked.

"That fellow who goes with Miss Katie, he came and asked for her."

"Albert Reedy. Then she left with him?"

"Mr. Stands, he left first; then Miss Katie and her fellow left; then around midnight the lady who was with Mr. Vane, she called for a taxi."

"Didn't Mr. Vane make the call for her?"

"No, suh. I never talked to Mr. Vane on the telephone after he came in."

"Did you see Miss Duvall when she came down?"

"Not her face. She came down soft-like, and walked out alone."

"Who came next to Mr. Vane's apartment?"

"About one o'clock Miss Landrum, a lady who used to come to see Mr. Vane, only she ain't come so much recently. She came. I called on the telephone. But he didn't answer. She said she'd go up. She did, and after a while she came back and said she couldn't get in."

"How long was she up there?"

"Maybe ten minutes—no longer."

"Who is this Miss Landrum?"

"Babe Landrum, they call her. She's in a show down at the Casino."

"This man Reedy," said Harlow slowly. "He seems to follow Katie up closely. Did he ever say anything to you about—well, whether he liked having her work for Mr. Vane or not?"

The negro rolled his eyes expressively.

"I don't think he was liking it," he said, "'count of he said Mr. Vane was all the time making love."

Harlow asked one more question: "You weren't at your station every minute of the time between when Mr. Vane and Miss Duvall came in and when the murder was discovered by Stands, were you?"

"No, suh. Sometimes I'm away for a little on errands."

Back in the taxi Harlow mused a moment. Then he said:

"I believe we'll try the Prince Edward next."

The car moved swiftly south on seventh avenue to Central Park, through which it curved to the southeast entrance. From here it was but a short distance down Fifth avenue to the Prince Edward, a quiet hotel of smart patronage.

"You're a little late," the clerk smiled. "Miss Duvall checked out at seven last night. A city detective just told me she had been traced to the Grand Central station, where she took a train after midnight."

"What line was she in?" Harlow asked.

"She is an actress, but she hadn't been doing anything recently."

Harlow made a telephone call.

"Just got a friend of mine at Headquarters," he explained as he came from the booth. "They're covering her arrival in Chicago. Now I'd like to drop in at Vane's bank."

Fifteen minutes later he came from the massive doors of a Fifth avenue banking concern, his face glowing eagerly. To the man in the taxi he cried: "Now, Professor, we're getting down to cases. Vane drew

five thousand dollars in cash yesterday to close some sort of a deal."

"But how do we know that had anything to do with his death?"

"We don't—yet. But I noticed a wall-safe up there, and tried it. It appeared to be locked. Wait, I'll telephone Stands."

As he returned this time Detective Harlow said:

"Stands says it's locked and he doesn't know where to look for the combination. We'll take up a man from the safe company. But first let's see Babe Landrum."

They got her address from the theatre at which she was playing. They located her lodging-house in the Fifties. But she was gone. However, a maid crossed the street with them to a bakery lunch, from the door of which she pointed out a chubby blonde at a marble-topped table.

Babe Landrum unmistakably was nervous when she looked up and found two strange men beside her. Not that she would be abashed by strange men under ordinary circumstances, Harlow thought, as he looked at the artificiality of her hair coloring and her heavy layer of rouge. Her nervousness was reflected in the manner in which she flipped over the paper she was reading. But not before Harlow saw what her eyes had been consuming—a scare-headed account of the Vane murder.

Her nervousness was accentuated as he introduced himself and Professor Carr.

"But don't let us interrupt your breakfast, Miss Landrum," he said. "We'll wait for you up in front."

They did not have long to wait. Harlow noticed that the girl did not touch her food. She merely gulped her coffee, and then joined them, her face pale except where the color was beyond penetration. They shut themselves up in the parlor of her rooming-house. There Landrum broke down with sobs of

"Poor Mr. Vane! Who could have killed him?"

"Be calm, Miss Landrum," said Harlow. "Tell us about yourself and Vane."

"I hadn't seen him for a month, officer," protested the girl, with intermittent sobs. "Honest to God, I had broke off with him!"

"But you went there last night."

She nodded convulsively.

"Yes," she choked, "I went there, but I didn't get in. I swear I didn't. I rang, and rang, and——"

"But why were you there at all?"

"Why is any woman a fool? He treated me good—until lately."

"You mean he'd cast you off?"

She made no reply, but wept on piteously.

"You're sure you didn't get into that apartment?"

"No, I didn't get in."

"And you didn't see Vane there, or anywhere, last night?"

She shook her head shiveringly. They thanked her and departed. In the next block Harlow made a call to a detective and had the girl placed under closest surveillance.

Then he asked Carr: "Did you notice her hair, Professor?"

"Very blondined, I thought."

"More than that. It was bobbed. Do bobbed-haired women use hairpins?"

"You'll have to ask an authority."

They picked up an expert to open Vane's safe. Back at the apartment Harlow put him at work. Then, after a moment, he came back to Carr with a smile.

"Katie's at work," he said. "So we won't have to hunt her all over Amsterdam avenue and environs." He excused himself and ordered Stands to send Katie Olmacher to him.

She was a small, yellow-haired girl, heavy of limb, with small blue eyes set in a rounded and not unattractive face. But about her was a suppressed, almost haunted way—the manner of a person who forces themselves to hold things back.

Harlow signaled her to a chair.

"How long have you worked for Mr. Vane?" he asked.

"About—about six months."

"Tell me about last night."

"I didn't see a thing, mister. Mr. Vane and the lady came in, and when I'd finished my work I left."

"You met Albert Reedy as you went out?"

"Yes, I met him there by the telephone. We went out the back way."

"Reedy didn't like the idea of your working for Mr. Vane, did he?"

"Why—why——" she started.

"Had you talked about it?"

"No—not much."

"Did Mr. Vane ever make love to you?"

She looked at him an instant, then dropped her eyes and said:

"No, sir," dropping her eyes.

John Harlow knew that she had lied.

"One question more: Why didn't you come at the usual time this morning?"

Before she could answer Professor Carr burst in:

"The money——" he began. Harlow silenced him with a gesture. He dismissed the girl. Then he turned to Carr.

"The money," said the latter in a low, intense voice, "the money is gone. The safe is empty."

Harlow dropped into a chair.

"Katie Olmacher," he said—"Katie Olmacher uses hairpins. I saw them in her hair."

Carr stared at him in mingled irritation and amazement.

"But the robbery!" he cried. "What has that to do with the hairpin theory?"

"What were women after Vane for?" Harlow asked abruptly. "They might say love. But they would mean money. Why wait for it in small portions with a large hunk in the safe?"

"You mean——"

"Because the safe has been robbed doesn't change my mind about the hairpin clue."

"Perhaps not. But what's the next move?"

Harlow drew Carr over away from the door. He said in a low voice: "We're working on Antoinette Duvall, on Babe Landrum and Katie. There's one more I want to see—Reedy, and I'm going to see him without his knowledge of my presence. Let's look at the layout of this place."

There was a reception hall at the front. Thence the living-room and the library opened. From it also went a passage to the rear. In this hall, near the front door, Harlow found a large closet. He opened and closed it. Then he examined its lock.

"Professor," he said, "I want you to explain to Stands that some important papers are to be locked in this closet. You are to keep the key. I will have my men summon Babe Landrum and Albert Reedy. They are to think I want to see them here. And I will be here—only I won't. Get me?"

It was arranged that Carr should lock the closet and leave the key with the superintendent. This same superintendent, properly taken into Harlow's confidence, handed the detective the key early that afternoon, and then went ahead to the door of the Vane apartment. Harlow followed at a distance.

Stands admitted the superintendent, who explained that there had been some trouble with the pipes. Certain examinations had to be made; certain questions had to be asked. Even Katie was called into the conference, which took place at the rear. By the time this adroitly contrived conference was ended Harlow was in the front door and safely locked in the hall closet.

Then began a vigil, during which Harlow watched the hall through the keyhole. After a time Babe Landrum appeared. Stands ushered her in, saying that Mr. Harlow had told him he would be back about three o'clock. Reedy arrived soon after, and was shown into the same room. Not long after that Harlow observed Katie Olmacher steal through the hall and join Miss Landrum and Reedy in the living-room.

Cautiously Harlow opened the closet door. Then he stole silently across to the living-room door, which was ajar. He listened intently, occasionally venturing a look. Reedy was speaking in soft, rather effeminate tones. Katie was listening.

There was a slight sound further back in the house. Against his will Harlow left the door. Passing the door to the library, he crouched for a moment before it, staring through the keyhole. Then he rose and tiptoed to the front door. As it closed behind him his manner changed. He was now De-

tective John Harlow paying an official visit. He rang, entered and talked with those in the living-room one by one.

At seven that evening Professor Carr found Harlow seated in the living-room of the late Jordan Vane reading a telegram.

"Look at that, Professor," Harlow said. "Miss Duvall not on train on arrival at main station Checking other stations."

"So," said Professor Carr, "she may have been the lady who dropped the hairpin."

"I don't like her disappearing, to say the least. And, speaking of ladies, Carr, I talked to this chap Reedy this afternoon."

"He's as bad as that?"

"He's effeminate and all. But he's a puzzle. The matter of this girl Katie working for Vane seemed to worry him, despite his lady-like ways. I'm not sure. At any rate we're watching him."

"And Babe Landrum and Katie?"

"I had a session with the latter this afternoon," said Harlow, an exultant twinkle in his eye.

"Did you get anything good?"

"I don't know—yet," he said, turning to answer the telephone. After a short conversation he told Carr: "Babe Landrum didn't go to the theatre tonight. She took the elevated and went to an apartment-house in the Bronx."

Stands entered with a wire. Harlow read it, and shook his head. "Private Chicago agency asks a better description of Miss Duvall," he said. "They're putting out a general bulletin on her."

"Is there anything else, sir?" asked Stands.

"Nothing," said the detective. "Why don't you call it a day, Stands? You were up all last night. Professor Carr and I will be here. By the way, has Katie gone?"

"She left at the usual time. Good-night, sir. If you need me, call."

Harlow nodded, bending over the draught of a wire he was framing for Chicago. When it was completed Professor Carr took it to a telegraph office close by. Returning, he found John Harlow in an easy-chair staring vacantly into the fire. The detective seemed in no mood to talk.

Carr was almost dozing when the telephone rang. Harlow grasped it instantly. He listened, a peculiar intensity and satisfaction overspreading his face. "Yes—yes—yes!" he rejoined sharply. Then: "What's that number on Amsterdam again. All right. I'll be there in five minutes."

"Now, Carr," cried the detective as he hung up, "we'll see." Intuitively he felt for his revolver. Professor Carr guessed that the time for speculation had given way to the time for action.

A man was awaiting them in a taxi below. Harlow sent him back to the Vane apartment with word to bring after them any important messages. Carr got into the cab. Harlow followed with a sharp order to the driver. The machine rushed around a curve in Edgecombe avenue and rose to St. Nicholas avenue. Thence it sped north until, at Harlow's order, it turned into a side street. The pair leaped out of the machine. Beside an apartment building fronting the street a dark figure met them.

It was a man in plain clothes who pointed upward through a court. "That's the rear of the building fronting on Amsterdam," he whispered. "It's Apartment 48, fourth floor. There's two men on the fire escape ready to close in the minute you ring."

"Good!" said Harlow. "You come with us." They entered from Amsterdam avenue. As softly as possible they made their way upstairs. Then they stood before apartment 48, fourth floor.

Harlow gave the bell a long, insistent ring. Then he and the other man crowded close up to the door. In a moment there were steps. Then the door opened.

Carr was unable to see who was within, as the hall was dark. But he did see the detectives in front plunge ahead, and he heard footsteps swiftly retreating before them. Rushing after, he went down the dark passage, a turmoil of sounds in his ears. There were raised, excited voices, the smashing of a lamp, furniture overturning, then darkness.

"Where are you, boys?" cried Harlow's voice.

"Over here, Chief. Let's have a glim." With his flash Harlow located ceiling

lights and turned them on. It was a small room in the centre of which stood two detectives. Their drawn guns were directed at a struggling pair half buried by the overturn of a davenport. Then gradually before the surprised eyes of Professor Carr the detectives on the floor brought to sight George Stands, the butler.

"The money?" asked Harlow as Stands was handcuffed.

One of the men slapped his bulging chest with a laugh. "He had hid it in the davenport," he said. "He tried to get it on his way out."

"But Stands——" began Carr, open-mouthed.

"This afternoon," said Harlow, "Katie confessed. Last night before she left she witnessed a stormy scene between Vane and Stands. Stands was dismissed. He had been splitting fees with a bootlegger. Indications are he suspected his master would be under the weather toward morning, and he returned then for the money. The hall boy didn't see him, so he must have sneaked in. Vane must have caught him, and fought. He killed Vane. Then, with the loop-hole that he usually was sent out on such nights, he decided to bluff it out. He stole out, rented this room where he had the money and the gun, then went back later and 'discovered' the murder."

"But Katie—he might have known——"

"He knew things about her and Vane which would have broken her up with Reedy. That's how he shut her up. My surmise of this and my promise to her of absolute secrecy——"

There was a ring. The man left behind at the Vane apartment entered and handed Harlow a wire. Harlow read it, and said: "Miss Duvall evidently was on her way to Chicago to take a theatrical engagement. She read of the murder on the train, and was so shocked that she stopped off with friends in a suburb. What else, Brady?"

"Our man called about the Landrum woman. She's with friends and——"

"Shock, that's all that's wrong with her. She, Miss Duvall and Reedy were simply victims of circumstances. All right, boys, let's be on our way."

Professor Carr could hardly wait until they were alone to say to the detective: "Well, Harlow, success varies its channels. The hairpin clue didn't work after all."

"It didn't?" asked the detective with a peculiar smile. "My dear Professor, it's the very thing that *did* work! After watching that trio in the living-room this afternoon, and hoping for a clue that never came, I turned and idly stared through the keyhole of the library. Stands was sitting inside in deep thought. And, absently, he was digging at his ear with a hairpin."

"You mean——"

"That's what he kept it for. In lifting Vane's body from the floor he probably dropped it from his vest pocket."

"But what——"

"Perhaps, Professor, living on such a mental plane, your ears never bother you—never itch so badly that you have to dig at them. Remember what I said about studying the body? As I watched Stands, suddenly it all came to me—because—because I keep a hairpin for that purpose myself!"

LEGALLY DEAD, RESUSCITATED IN COURT

ISAAC CRANE, 77 years old, who has been legally dead for some time, was legally resuscitated by Surrogate Isherwood of Newark.

Mrs. Crane had her husband declared dead several months ago in order that she might sell a piece of his property. She had not seen him since 1901, she said. When Crane turned up after his legal demise his wife fought his efforts to come to life in the eyes of the law as the surrogate had declared him legally dead.

After Mrs. Crane identified her husband before Surrogate Isherwood recently her contention that he could not be brought back to life was overruled—and Crane's legal re-resurrection was sanctioned by the court.

Betrayed by Words

By EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER

"UNTIRING patience is one of the chief characteristics of a good detective," Inspector Trailor was saying between puffs on a big, black, vicious-looking cigar, as he strode ponderously up and down his office, "and don't forget that, Dougherty."

"You're right, Chief," Dougherty agreed, shifting his position so as to make himself more comfortable in the chair he was occupying.

"That's the trouble with the young fellows," Trailor went on. "The young chaps coming into the Department aren't willing to wait. They want to get results immediately. Good enough and praiseworthy, of course; but there are times when getting results is more than a slow job. We old-timers know. Eh, Dougherty?"

Dougherty nodded.

"For instance, there was Mackintosh," Trailor continued reminiscently. "Mac was a friend of mine. He's dead and gone these twenty years. He had a general store out in the country. It was one of those places at the crossroads where the farmers gather on winter nights to swap stories and solve world problems. They would sit late around the sawdust-filled spit-box and big-bellied stove, argue much, consume great quantities of plug-cut and, when the hour grew later, tramped home, some of them many miles. Mac would then bar the door and the windows and count the day's cash before turning in.

"One night he found the money-drawer rifled. It staggered him, but he said nothing. The money had been there when he had come down-stairs from supper to let his clerk go home. He had not left the store until the usual evening crowd had assembled, and then only for a few moments to go back into the stockroom for some desired article. It was not an unusual thing for one of the crowd to go behind the counter and help himself, for Mac was easy-going, and when once settled comfortably by the stove and deep in deliberation was loath to be disturbed. At times during the evening men had left their places to go behind the counter to help themselves to tobacco or cigars or what not. Without a doubt the cash-drawer had been opened and its contents stolen while others were present. Mac racked his brains, but could not hit upon a solution of the riddle. He made up his mind to say nothing and keep the knowledge of the theft to himself.

"Five years later, one winter night, as the crowd sat talking and smoking and chewing as usual, Jerry Frush suddenly leaned close to Mac.

"'You lose much that night five years gone, Mac,' Jerry asked, 'when your cash-drawer was cleaned out?'

"None there had ever heard of the theft, and the crowd was naturally surprised. They became all interest at once.

"'Not much,' Mac grunted.

"'Ever find out who done it?' Jerry queried.

"'Yep!'

"'You did?'

"'Huh-huh!' Mac answered, looking his questioner squarely in the eyes. 'I found out jus' now.'

"All of which merely substantiates my theory," Trailor ended. "The chap who was clever enough to rifle Mac's cash-drawer under the very noses of the proprietors and others, so to speak, wasn't clever enough to avoid the slip that gave him away. And what's true in this case is always true. Give the cleverest crook time and the slip will come that will offset all his cleverness. That's why patience, another name for per-

severance, stands highest in my estimation among the characteristics of a good crook-catcher."

He tossed the butt of his cigar away and settled heavily at his desk. The telephone rang insistently.

"Headquarters," Trailor answered.

As he listened changing expressions chased themselves in rapid succession over his florid features. Dougherty strained forward as if to catch what was coming in over the singeing wire.

"Get that chap inside," Trailor snapped. "Leave the street door shut, but unlocked. Stay out of the room, Higgins, but keep watch at the door. Don't let that man of Marco's get away. Hold him there."

He snapped up the receiver and sprang to his feet, as agile as a cat in spite of his bulk.

"Come along, Dougherty," he flung over his shoulder, as he hurried to the door. "There's trouble."

"What's broke?" Dougherty asked.

"Murder!"

"Where?"

"St. Paul Street apartment."

"Who?"

"Tony Marco."

"Marco!" Dougherty exclaimed. "Somebody's got him at last?"

"Somebody has," Trailor answered.

Twenty minutes later Higgins met them at the top of the apartment-house stairs.

"Everything's th' way I found it, Chief," Higgins explained, "when I hustled in here after Reilly staggered out as white as a ghost. I've drawn th' curtains over th' door. That's all. We jus' couldn't set here, Chief, starin' at that thing inside. He's Reilly," Higgins ended in answer to Trailor's questioning glance at the limp form in a huddle in a big chair by the door.

"Watch him," Trailor ordered, as he and Dougherty pushed through the curtains and let them fall behind them with a soft rustling.

The room in which they found themselves was as dark as a pocket, although it was just the time of autumn twilight. Trailor groped along the wall until he found the electric switch, and then flooded the place with light. The heavy draperies had been pulled across the high windows, the room had been ransacked and Tony Marco, his head horribly crushed by some blunt instrument, lay face down on the rug in front of the open fireplace. He had evidently been struck from behind while standing in front of the fire reading a newspaper, which he still clutched in his dead hands. The room had been literally turned upside-down and inside-out. A safe in the wall had been broken into, its compartments jerked open and their contents scattered about. The big safe by the desk had been rifled and the desk itself had been gutted. Even the cushions of the chairs had been slashed open.

"The guy who pulled this job wasn't after money," Dougherty muttered. "Marco's roll is intact and none of his diamonds are missing."

"Not a clue," Trailor was saying, as he went over the disordered room with minute care. "Not a single clue. Some clever work, if you're asking me."

Dougherty stared his surprise.

"Not a single clue," Trailor repeated, "except this handkerchief, and I think it's a plant."

Tony Marco's murder was played up in the papers under eye-startling heads. His sensational career from street newsboy to the shrewdest criminal lawyer in the world was set forth in lurid detail, as was his leadership of the underworld elements, the powers that prey.

"Bring Alhart in," Trailor directed the morning after the murder.

"What's the game?" Alhart demanded half an hour later.

"You and Marco were on the outs, weren't you?" Trailor queried.

"There was no love between us," Alhart replied. "Why?"

"What do you know about Marco's finish?" Trailor asked abruptly.

'What do I know?" Alhart exclaimed.

"What do you know?" Trailor repeated.

"Me?" Alhart laughed; "not a thing, Inspector!"

"Not a thing, eh?"

"Not a thing!"

"This yours?" Trailor demanded, tossing a white linen handkerchief to Alhart. "That

your laundry-mark? That your monogram?"

"Sure this is mine," Alhart answered. "What of it?"

"What was that doing in Marco's room?"

"Search me, Inspector!"

"We found it there."

"That sure beats me," Alhart chuckled, "but you 'bulls' are barking up the wrong tree this time. I didn't get into town until this morning. I haven't been here since two days before somebody croaked Marco. You've got me wrong, Inspector. The 'bulls' grabbed me as soon as I dropped off the train. I'm more than glad that Marco's dead, but it wasn't my doings. Sorry to have caused you chaps so much trouble," he laughed, "but you're simply wasting your time. I'm out of this. I can prove what I say."

And Alhart did.

"Just as I thought," Trailor growled. "That was just a fake lead. Alhart's alibi hasn't a flaw in it. He's cleared himself. Alhart was threatening Marco's leadership and Marco swore he'd get him. Somebody got Marco first and tried to put the blame on Alhart. Who? Why? What's the answer?"

The Marco murder, however, proved to be the usual nine-day wonder, and public interest soon turned from the killing itself to the seeming helplessness of the Police Department in the face of increasingly daring criminality. Inspector Trailor and his aids appeared completely at sea. Public indignation and the scathing criticism of the press did not tend to make life easier for them.

The days grew into weeks, the weeks lengthened into months, six months passed and still the Marco killing was unsolved. Detective Dougherty, in whom Trailor had the utmost confidence, was working on the case day and night, until his nerves were worn to a frazzle.

"Better get the case off your mind for a while," Trailor advised. "Ease up a bit. Take a week off."

"Nothing doing!" Dougherty answered, his tired eyes belying the smile on his lips. "No easing up till I get this bird, if it takes till hell freezes over."

In running down what seemed a promising lead, Dougherty hastened to the western part of the State. The lead petered out, as all the others had done, and he took the Seaboard Express for the city. Turning his bag over to the porter, he went to the smoking-room of the Pullman. He was worn out mentally as well as physically. He slouched in a corner of the leather settee next to the window and lit a cigar. In a little while his cigar went out and he was too tired to relight it. He drew his soft hat down so as to shade his face and folded his arms upon his chest. As though from far away he heard the trainmen call, the platforms drop, the doors slam, laughter, hurrying feet and the regular clickety-clack, clickety-click of the wheels as they crossed the rail-joints. Then he went sound asleep, puffing softly at intervals.

Suddenly Dougherty was wide awake and instantly on the alert. He was no longer alone.

"Trailor and his crowd's beat again," a cold voice was saying, and Dougherty recognized it as that of a notorious underworld character known as Snowbird Berman because of his weakness for dope. "Th' 'bulls' always take a sad tumble when they're up against real brains. Tony Marco's been dead more'n six months now and what have th' 'bulls' done? Answer me that. Dougherty's runnin' himself blue in th' face chasin' down clues. It is to laugh."

"Berman's been sleigh-riding again," Dougherty thought. "He's all snowed up or he wouldn't be shooting off his face so fiercely."

"Th' 'bulls' make me sick," Snowbird sneered. "They aren't any nearer th' solution of th' killin' today than they were th' minute Marco cashed in. Why don't they nab Alhart?"

"They did arrest him," came the retort. "I saw that in th' papers."

"Sure!" Snowbird continued. "But what was th' use? They let th' bird loose again."

"He proved an alibi. That was in th' papers, too."

"Alibi?" Snowbird snorted. "Hell! You aren't that green, are you? Anybody can prove an alibi if they only know th'

ropes. Alibi? It is to laugh. Th' blind fools had Alhart and they let him go."

Dougherty simulated a snore.

"They had Alhart," Snowbird repeated. "Why did they turn him loose?"

"I'll bite," the other laughed. "Why?"

"Nobody home upstairs under th' roof," Snowbird snarled. "That's why! It stands to reason Alhart had a hand in th' killin'."

"Why?" his companion asked.

"It's like this," Snowbird explained. "Tony Marco's been havin' things his way since Noah's time in th' easy-money graft. See? And it's one sweet graft, too. I know. Anyway, Alhart gets it into his noddle to tumble Marco from his high horse. That's why Alhart croaked Marco or had him croaked. Even if th' 'bulls' don't get th' goods on Alhart, he won't be havin' smooth sailin'. He's got me to reckon with. I haven't been Marco's right bower for years for nothin'. I'm wise, I am. Why, with that guy Alhart stowed away in th' stir or under th' daisies I'd be th' one Big Noise with th' good people."

Dougherty snored a second time.

"What gets me hot under th' collar," Snowbird growled in a rage, "is that th' 'bulls' have evidence galore on Alhart and yet they turn him loose. They found Alhart's handkerchief in th' room with Marco. His alibi let him get away from under that. What I'd like to know is why those blind 'bulls' didn't get wise to Alhart's fingerprints. They were all over everythin' in the room. Those fingerprints——"

Dougherty yawned, stretched and sat up, at the same time poking his automatic into Snowbird's shrinking ribs. The other man stared at the pair in wide-eyed amazement.

"You're under arrest, Snowbird," Dougherty snapped, "for the murder of Tony Marco. Hold out your hands for the bracelets."

"What th'——!" Snowbird choked, as the handcuffs clinked into place around his wrists.

"I wouldn't do any more talking, Snowbird," Dougherty advised. "You have done much more than is good for you already."

"What do you mean?" Snowbird gasped, fear beginning to grow in his eyes.

"Just this, Snowbird," Dougherty replied. "Only three persons in the whole world knew about those fingerprints—Inspector Trailor, the murderer and myself. We kept those fingerprints completely under cover. Not a word has been breathed about them. You spilled the beans just now when you mentioned them. I haven't been sleeping. This is your finish, Snowbird. You'll swing for this."

"But they were Alhart's fingerprints," Snowbird protested.

"So was the handkerchief Alhart's," Dougherty laughed grimly. "You planted the stuff there. With Marco gone and Alhart gone you would have things your own way. You worked an old game, Snowbird, and I believe you would have got away with it if you hadn't talked too much. You got Alhart's fingerprints somehow, had them pressed into rubber gloves, wore them when you ransacked Marco's apartment, and there you are. You lost sight of the fact that Alhart wasn't even in town when you pulled your clever job."

Snowbird's face became a pasty white and, licking his dry lips, he settled back in his seat with hideous trembling.

"Though it won't help you any now, Snowbird," Dougherty spoke thoughtfully, "no really clever guy ever does a lot of jawing. Your weakness for conversation means that you will be doing the air-dance before very long."

And Dougherty was right.

The Last Job

By ARTHUR M. MILLS

CHAPTER ONE

FIVE uneventful days in the quiet atmosphere of the little Rockhaven Hotel had left Arden Sinclair in such a state of boredom that he would have welcomed almost any interruption. It was late in September. Most of the hotels and cottages were closed for the season, and he and three or four other stragglers were all who remained at the small seaside hostelry.

For the twentieth time that day Sinclair rose from his chair, strolled to the porch railing and stood gazing for a few moments at the rock-bound Rhode Island coast. Huge white-capped breakers were dashing themselves to pieces against the moss-covered stone wall along the Weekapaug Beach. Perhaps he had been unnecessarily cautious in coming here, he ruminated, for there had been no evidence whatever to connect him with the Fidelity bond theft. Nearly a week had elapsed, no clues had been found, and apparently the New York police had given up the case. But there had been no harm in his dropping out of sight for a few days—that is, none except his broken theatre engagement with Drusilla, and he had already made amends for that by wiring his regrets, and ordering Rosenbaum, the florist, to deliver a dozen of his choicest American Beauties to her.

Dear, innocent little Drusilla! It was for her future happiness that Sinclair had plundered the Fidelity Insurance Company's safe of sixty thousand dollars in securities. And it was for her that he was now about to execute his master stroke, provided everything worked out as he had planned, including the possibility of his receiving an invitation to the Vanderbent ball in Newport. It was at the Vanderbent country estate, he recollected, that he had first met Drusilla Hartwell, less than two months ago. There at a gay house-party he had wooed and won her in the short space of two days. While at this house-party he had taken the trouble to learn where his hostess, owner of the internationally famous Kronsbad necklace, kept her historic string of royal pearls that her husband had purchased in Vienna the year before. Sinclair figured that he could realize a cool ninety thousand from the sale of this erstwhile heirloom of the Emperor Francis Joseph's family, even at the low rate for which all stolen jewelry must be sacrificed. The ninety thousand, added to the Fidelity haul, would give him a sizable amount with which to start in some legitimate business that would enable him to support Drusilla in the style to which she was accustomed.

In fact, this was his last "job." With the successful completion of the Vanderbent robbery he would give up the double life which he had been leading for the last ten years. Drusilla had promised to marry Sinclair when he was posing as a clubman, scion of a venerable Gotham family, and prominent in the social affairs of New York's younger set. She must never know him to be Sinclair the safe-cracker, who raided homes and offices at night to obtain the funds whereby Sinclair the clubman kept up his membership in three exclusive organizations, maintained a luxurious apartment on Riverside Drive, and spent his summers at Newport. The man would have gone through hell rather than allow her to become the innocent victim of his own shame and disgrace. He worshipped her. She was his goddess, the goal of his life's ambition. No, he would go straight for her sake, starting immediately after the Krons-

bad necklace had been converted into cash. No qualms of conscience, no moral awakening had made him decide to reform. He was too hardened, too experienced and cynical to give up his nefarious occupation for moral reasons. It was fear—fear of exposure and prison—that caused him to make his decision. He had always operated without confederates, was entirely unknown to habitués of New York's underworld, and had never been arrested for a graver offence than speeding. Even his own servants were unaware of the fact that they were serving a social impostor, whose income depended entirely on burglary.

If the Vanderbent job proved as easy as Sinclair anticipated, he would give up his double rôle with a clean slate, so far as police record was concerned, and continue his life in the upper strata of metropolitan society, leaving the secret of his former criminal existence locked safely in the recesses of his own mind.

Returning to the hotel lobby, Sinclair put in a long-distance telephone call for his New York apartment. A few minutes later he was in conversation with Yashihito, his Japanese servant, whom he had thought best to leave behind on this trip.

"Hello, that you, Yashihito?" he asked gruffly, when the connection had been made.

"Yes, Meester Sinclair," replied the servant, instantly recognizing the none-too-welcome voice of his master.

"Any mail for me since I left home?"

"Yes, Meester Sinclair—beeg quantity letters and papers, sir. All no account but four, sir. These are bill from Rosenbaum for $19.60, note from John Markham reminding you of mixed foursome at Evesdale Golf Club, card announcing marriage of Sidney Van Lear Blythe, and formal invitation from——"

"Yes—go on!" demanded his master, in eager anticipation.

"From Meeses Oswald Vanderbent, requesting your presence at a Venetian masquerade ball, the closing social event of the——"

"Hurrah!" Sinclair was so elated that he quite forgot himself for the moment and voiced his feelings aloud to the great surprise of the Oriental at the other end.

"What's matter, sir?" asked the Japanese, alarmed at his master's sudden exclamation, and not knowing whether it was one of joy or dismay.

"Mind your own business, you yellow dog," snapped Sinclair. "And don't try any tricks while I'm away, either, or I'll—well, you know what, you cursed heathen! Just do as you're told, and your dirty skin will be safe. But if you try to desert me again, I'll see to it that the Kwang-lao——"

"Oh, please, Meester Sinclair, please don't!" pleaded the other in terrified tones.

"Then behave yourself. And, by the way, if you need to wire or phone me about anything, address Edward Wilson, Rockhaven Hotel, Weekapaug, Rhode Island. Edward Wilson, remember. I'm here for rest and quiet, you know, and thought it best to register incognito."

"Yes, sir. Very well, sir."

Yashihito's reply was polite enough, but as he hung up the receiver and turned from the telephone there was a menacing scowl on his dark face and his keen black eyes flashed with a malicious intensity that would have thrown fear into the heart of Arden Sinclair had he been able to see the effect of his own domineering attitude upon the servant. Revolt, hatred, revenge—all were plainly visible in the sinister countenance of the Japanese as he muttered a half-audible oath in his own tongue and shook a clenched fist threateningly at the telephone through which his master's cutting words had just been transmitted.

For seven years forced submission had been his lot—seven long years of virtual slavery, during which he had served Sinclair faithfully in body, though not in spirit. And seven years hence, unless death interfered with the order of things, he would still be accepting jibes and insults from the man he hated above all others. Sometimes the Oriental wondered which was preferable, sudden death from an avenging knife of the Kwang-lao, Eastern Japan's miniature imitation of the Italian Black Hand, or life in the household of Arden Sinclair, with all its material comforts yet mental

anguish. But always after weighing death and slavery in the balance he decided against the former, and hopefully awaited some miracle that would lead to his emancipation.

A peculiar character was Yashihito—one of those semi-Americanized Asiatics who speak the language and wear the clothes of their adopted country, but whose hearts are in the land of their birth. The only son of a wealthy silk merchant of Tokio, he had come to America eight years before to complete his education and see the prosperous nation that for twenty years had purchased nine-tenths of his father's exports. Whenever Yashihito was in one of his revengeful moods his mind automatically reverted to the events leading up to his present unbearable existence. A year at the University of California, his father's complete business failure and death, six weeks of walking the streets of Los Angeles and San Francisco while seeking for employment, and then the awful night—he shuddered to think of it—when he had fought his bloody battle with Wahtsu—the mighty Wahtsu, the leader of San Francisco's Japanese Black Hand element, the Imperial High Potentate of the Kwang-lao in America.

It was in self-defense, Yashihito had told himself over and over again; but what jury in the land would believe the testimony of an alien Japanese against that of the wealthy and highly respected Mr. Sinclair?

And even though an American court of justice might prove him innocent of murder, the avenging Kwang-lao would undoubtedly ignore his legal vindication.

"Take your choice," Sinclair had told him five minutes after Wahtsu's blood-stained body had been concealed in an empty well on the outskirts of San Francisco. "Enter my employ, serve me faithfully, and neither your fellow countrymen nor the police shall ever connect you with Wahtsu's disappearance. But if you refuse my offer I'll have the Kwang-lao on your trail within an hour, not to mention the police department. Tonight I leave for New York. Will you accompany me? Or do you prefer to have me inform the Kwang-lao of what I chanced to see as I was driving in from the Country Club? Choose!"

There was but one alternative, and Yashihito had taken it rather than face death from the dreaded Japanese secret society. Today, after seven years of slavery, he was still in the power of Sinclair, who had found the well-educated Oriental not only an excellent secretary-valet, but an economical one as well. To have a servant of Yashihito's calibre serving without pay meant a considerable saving to the pseudo-millionaire, whose heavy overhead expenses as a clubman, sportsman and society devotee had to be offset by almost niggardly economy in his home life.

A sharp ring of the doorbell roused the servant suddenly from his unpleasant reverie. Glancing at the hall mirror to make certain that his face showed no sign of the recent fit of anger, he stepped to the front door and stopped, nearly paralyzed with fear, at sight of a fellow countryman, who stood waiting to be admitted. Since that fearful night in San Francisco, when fate had thrust him into the arms of Arden Sinclair, he had avoided the companionship of members of his own race, fearing the intercourse with them might lead to the discovery of his part in the disappearance of the Kwang-lao's former leader, Wahtsu. Now, faced by this stranger, a well-dressed, business-like Japanese, of nearly twice his own size, his first impulse was to flee. However, his training as a servant proved stronger than his natural inclination, and he faced the caller with a bold front.

"Is Mr. Sinclair at home?" inquired the stranger, in almost perfect English. "Gone to the seashore for a vacation, you say? Very well." Then, lowering his voice, and speaking in Japanese, he continued:

"You are Yashihito. My own name matters not. I represent a certain body of Jananese that you have feared during seven years of service to your present master. Fear no longer. An eye-witness who saw Wahtsu fall has confessed that you fought only to preserve you own life. Here is a written message of assurance from our Supreme Scribe. And as a special gift, to partially recompense you for the mental

anguish you have suffered, I am giving you some written evidence that agents of our organization fortunately ran across last night. It may prove of value to you. Farewell, most honorable worshipper of the almighty Buddha."

CHAPTER TWO

LEAVING the throng of gay dancers, who for several hours had been making merry at Mrs. Vanderbent's Venetian ball, Sinclair called for his top-coat and hat. He bade his hostess a cordial farewell. A headache was his excuse for departing early. He started down the corridor in the direction of the front entrance. Outside the library door, which stood wide open, he paused a moment, looked leisurely about and then, finding himself unobserved, sauntered nonchalantly into the dark room.

Having assured himself that a window overlooking Mrs. Vanderbent's rose-garden would open easily, he curled up in a leather-upholstered rocker and calmly waited for the other guests to make their departure. Even if some member of the family or a servant should enter and turn on a light, any one of a dozen excuses he might offer would be readily accepted.

How lovely Drusilla had looked tonight, he thought, in that gown of blue silk charmeuse with dainty fur trimming. If professional duties had not interfered, he himself would have accompanied her to the ball instead of leaving her to the protection of that ugly-faced old uncle, her legal guardian, who had recently arrived from his home in Montana.

Tonight, for the last time, sentiment must give way to business. The last job remained to be pulled off. Tomorrow, if everything went all right, they would be quietly married at the little parsonage around the corner from his hotel. Then with a capital of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars the recreated Sinclair, who had already received the promise of a directorship in the new Atlantic and Pacific Aerial Transportation Company, would sail with his bride to the Bermudas and try to forget that such a character as Sinclair the safe-cracker had ever existed. What a pleasure it would be to share the companionship of this dainty little miss, whose innocent past, Sinclair told himself, stood out in marked contrast to his own criminal life.

The hall clock struck two. Sinclair, aroused from a half-sleep by the bell, rose from the comfortable armchair, stretched himself and stepped quietly around the bookcase toward the opposite corner wherein he knew Mrs. Vanderbent's wall-safe was concealed. A slight cough startled him. Could it be that the dark library had another occupant? Peering over the top of the bookcase, he caught the faint gleam of a light a few feet away, directly under the wall-safe.

Before the surprised man could decide which way to turn in the face of this unlooked-for intrusion the light suddenly went out. There was the clatter of a falling chair and the sound of hurrying feet, then a thud as the fleeing intruder landed on the concrete driveway, after jumping down through the very window by way of which Sinclair had planned to make his own exit.

Cautiously turning on his pocket flashlight, Sinclair saw at a glance that his rival had evidently been successful. The safe stood wide open and empty. Below it on the floor were strewn several bundles of worthless letters and papers that had been cast aside by the practiced hands of the burglar. But the Kronsbad necklace was gone!

Sinclair's first impulse after realizing that he had been foiled by his own carelessness, coupled with the skill of a fellow craftsman, was to jump through the open window, spring upon the new possessor of the royal necklace, and make him give up his precious booty at the point of an automatic. But a saner review of the situation showed the folly of causing a disturbance that might put the whole household upon his heels. What chance would he have against a whole retinue of servants who were familiar with every foot of ground on the estate, and who would summon the police to their assist-

ance? Putting safety before cupidity, the disappointed robber replaced the scattered contents of the safe, picked up the overturned chair, quietly closed the library window behind him, and made his way dejectedly back to the hotel where he was staying temporarily.

As he fumbled for the key to his room under a dim hall light Sinclair was accosted by a strangely familiar hulk of a man. Closer inspection revealed the square-jawed, freckled face of Pat Halloran, the last person on earth whom he would have desired to see after last night's little adventure. Halloran, the smartest "dick" of New York's police force! The name was enough to strike terror into even the heart of the seemingly immune Mr. Sinclair, whose only knowledge of prison life had been gained through reading newspapers and viewing motion pictures.

Behind Halloran, almost hidden from view in the dark shadows of the hall, stood two uniformed members of the Newport police department.

"Will yuh come along peaceable like, Ardie, dear, or 'ave I got to use force?" mockingly inquired the big plainclothes man, prodding Sinclair's ribs with a revolver, while one of the local officers snapped handcuffs about the man's wrists.

Twelve hours later Detective Halloran, his prisoner and the latter's servant were speeding toward New York in the smoking-car of a New York, New Haven & Hartford express train.

"Too bad, ain't it, to make the rich Ardie Sinclair associate with a vulgar Irish detective? But it can't be helped, old chap."

Thus continued the talkative officer, finding unconcealed delight in the discomfiture of the downcast Sinclair.

"Come along with papa like a nice boy," he resumed. "Would it interest yuh to know what caused your air-castles to tumble down all on a sudden like? There's a stack of charges against yuh, Ardie, but the first indictment is for that little midnight party yuh pulled off in the Fidelity Insurance Company's office a few nights ago. Remember that little trick, do yuh? Pretty slick worker, Ardie, pretty slick; but that Jap servant, Yashi-what-yuh-call-'im, ain't no dumb-bell, now take it from me. While he's apparently servin' his master so faithful, he puts New York Headquarters wise to some startlin' information some other Jap gives him about yourself a few days ago. The Chief adds two and two together. Result: You're headed for Sing Sing via a New York courtroom, Yashi-whoever-he-is is out of a job—tickled to death, too—and I gets two important arrests to my credit within an hour.

"The other? Oh, Callahan and I sees a swell skirt—one that the Newport police has had their eye on all summer—actin' suspicious like in a broken-down taxi out near the Vanderbent place. We takes her in tow, finds a king's ransom on her, includin' old lady Vanderbent's string of pearls, and just natur'lly leads her 'round to the local hoosegow and finds lodgin's for her."

The detective paused a moment to light a cigar, and then continued his narrative, without noticing the strained and eager expression on the prisoner's face. "B'lieve me, bo, it'll be some scandal when them newspaper guys gets hold of her story. Says she was engaged to some sporty New Yorker with money to burn, and she didn't want him to find out she wasn't on the level. So last night the girl makes this big haul, thinkin' it'll be her last job, and that she can retire and live honest on the wad of dough she'd get for the pearls. Then, after sellin' them, she'd have plenty of kale to buy glad rags for the weddin', and the rich guy'd never know about her past life. It was her last job, all right, but not in just the sense she'd figured on. Her name? Let me see—I've got it wrote down somewhere. Here it is—Drusilla Hartwell."

Sinclair jumped as if stung by an electric shock. The burly Halloran, after yanking him back to the seat, marveled to see his prisoner, the hardened product of a criminal existence, bury his face in his hands and weep like an injured child.

"Funny guy," the officer muttered to himself. "Too high-strung and finicky to make a first-class safe-cracker, I'd say if I didn't know him."

On the Trail of Dope

By ADOLPHE BARREAUX

THE Chief was in a particularly serious frame of mind when the new agent approached him on the first day of his work in the department. He leaned back in his big chair, planted two hands squarely on the desk, and surveyed the fair-haired young man who stood before him. His appraising eyes narrowed under their bushy brows, and at length he spoke:

"Savill," he said, measuring his tones, "I have a pretty thorough record of your work down South. I am going to need every one of your qualities here—your clear brain and strong arm. I am going to put you on one of the toughest jobs you have probably ever faced. Take a chair."

Victor Savill drew up a chair and settled himself comfortably in it, waiting for Kelly to resume.

The Chief was lost in thought for a few moments and then said, half meditatively:

"You see, we are up against the insidious traffic in drugs. As soon as we stamp out one spot a dozen more rise in its place. It is a long, hard fight. I understand that the Federal authorities have one of their cleverest agents at work here, but I haven't the slightest idea who he is or what he is doing. So we must go ahead and conduct our own investigations and achieve what results we can by our own efforts. You understand how things stand?"

"Quite, sir," was the short, polite rejoinder.

"Well," the Chief continued, "here is the line for you to work upon: For some months a Chinaman named Chu-Chen has been running a gambling house uptown. We have not molested him because we can generally lay our hands on most any crook we want there. His place is in the nature of a convenience. Lately, however, we have become quite certain that, in addition to being a gambling house, it is one of the biggest centres for the distribution of dope in New York. They deal in opium in a small way, but the traffic in cocaine, heroin and such stuff is carried on in a volume that would tax your credence. Chu-Chen is not the real big power up there. He is just manager—clever enough, but merely a servant of the mysterious ring that manufactures the dope and directs its outlet. We are ignorant of the source of all this crime, but it is high time to break up that centre. Your assignment will be to gather all the information you can in preparation for a cleanup. We don't expect to stage anything for at least a week, but when we do I want to know everything I need to."

Savill lazily threw one leg across the other and tapped a cigarette on the back of his hand. In just such movements his grace and strength were revealed. The slender frame was deceptive; every muscle was a band of steel, and his brain the quickest in all the service.

"I see," he said. "It is the old game in the dark—Blind Man's Buff. Is that all you want me to do—get the lay of the land?"

"That is all, until we know what we will do. Too many raids have been bungled before. The unknown quantity, as I have told you, are the Federal officers. I have good reason to believe that they are centering their attentions on Chu-Chen's place, but all their operations are done in the dark. As it is, they may make an open move up there before we do; but it won't make any difference to you. Go quietly ahead and report when you think it necessary."

"How do I get in Chu-Chen's place?"

"You will be vouched for by some one

known there and will enter as a business man seeking drugs. This will pass you in. The address is written on the back."

The Chief handed a small card across the desk. Savill took it and glanced at the name, under which was scribbled the word "brick-dust." On the back was the address, 7 River Place. He carefully stowed the card away, and with a hearty handshake took leave of his Chief.

At nine o'clock that same evening Savill slipped a small automatic into his pocket and strode from his rooms. He walked up quiet Fifth Avenue and then boarded a bus that lumbered up Riverside Drive and northward along brilliantly alive Broadway. He descended at 155th Street, and stopped at the curb to get a detailed idea of his whereabouts. Broadway stretched away on either hand, a busy concourse lined with bright shops. At right angles 155th street slipped away between a solemn museum and silent cemetery, and dropped quickly and furtively to the river front, under the aqueduct of Riverside Drive, where the huge, towering forms of apartment-houses loomed as dark gray masses against the sky.

Savill made his way down the deserted block and came to a little row of crumbling old residences that stood like a forlorn, forgotten settlement, forming River Place. He found his number to be a square edifice with old-fashioned mansard roof, utterly wrapped in silence and gloom. He skirted a neglected little garden in front and approached the potal, where a dim lamp showed him a button at the side. This he pushed and heard the echo in a far-off ringing.

After a short wait the officer was admitted by a colored servant and ushered into a sort of anteroom. He had hardly seated himself when a Chinaman appeared —a thoroughly Americanized Oriental, with close-cropped hair. He was attired in the latest New York style.

"I named Chu-Chen," he said. "Where your card?"

Savill silently produced his bit of pasteboard and handed it over. The Chinaman scrutinized it and said tersely:

"You come."

The detective nodded and followed him down a long passage. They descended a winding stairway. At the bottom of this they traversed another corridor, at the end of which a Chinese boy took the visitor's hat and stick. Then, with a bow and wave of the hand, Chu-Chen indicated a heavily curtained doorway.

Savill stepped beyond the portieres, and his eyes opened in wonder, for the scene was utterly alien to New York. It was like some colorful haunt of the lawless in Shanghai or Macao, with all the jostling of types that compose those crowds "east of Suez," on the fringe of civilization.

The immense room was alive with people in all sorts of attire. Men in evening-dress were elbowed by furtive gangsters. Women with hard, rouged faces leered over the green tables and laughed shrilly whenever they made a winning. Behind each table sat the croupier—mostly orientals, these men, but here and there a wizened occidental countenance. Heavy clouds of tobacco smoke floated on the dead air and indicated the poor ventilation of the room, which was, Savill was sure, underground. He surveyed the scene for a moment, then proceeded to stroll around and gain more impressions. One of the women sought to attach him, but he successfully evaded her and continued on among the tables. At one he made a five-dollar play, lost, and sauntered on.

Savill wondered what the open space in the center of the room was for. Presently, however, he found out. A gong was suddenly sounded and chairs were brought out. Three Hindu musicians took their places. Every one crowded around, and the detective found himself beside a fidgeting little bald-headed man. He inquired what was on foot.

"Why, don't you know?" exclaimed the bald one. "This is Nacha's night. She dances here once a week, and she is wonderful, man—wonderful. See, here she comes."

Savill's eye followed the pointing finger and he saw a square section of the ceiling slowly descending. As it came lower, inch by inch, he saw that it was suspended by

four metal rods, and on it a woman was poised. When the platform touched the floor she sprang lightly off and the square slid quickly upward.

She was an exotic figure, this apparition from above, clad in no more than a diaphanous costume and silver pictoral shields, her olive skin glowing under the shaded lights. Her jet-black eyes and hair were striking spots against her delicate skin and carmined lips. For a moment she was as immovable as a statue, then, at the slow rhythm of the orchestra, she began an insidious dance of the East, commencing with the slow stretching of her lithe body, then working into a series of swirls and turns as the man at the tomtom increased the tempo with his flying hands. Faster and faster went the drum, swifter sped the dancing feet, as Nacha moved in the fiery passion of her dance, her red lips parted and her black eyes flashing.

It was the incarnation of everything physically graceful and appealed to the majority of the crowd, whose intent gaze was upon her. The little man next to Savill clutched his arm and craned forward, his breath coming in short gasps. Even the detective found himself enthralled.

Finally, with arms outstretched and a stamp of her foot, Nacha's dance came to a pause. An attendant enveloped her in a silken robe, and the crowd closed around to pay her homage. Savill could see her black head among the throng as she chattered gaily to this one and then that. He remained alone on the far side of the room, and was casually lighting a cigarette when he looked up and saw the dancer's eyes upon him. Impetuously she brushed through the people and made straight for the officer. She surveyed him for a moment defiantly, and then spoke in strangely excellent English.

"Doesn't my dancing please you?" she asked smilingly.

The detective saw the urgent need of a flattering reply, as he could afford no unnecessary risks; so with a slight bow, he said:

"I was more than pleased. I was held entranced."

"Why do you stand over here by yourself?"

"Because I thought you so wonderful that I did not dare to approach too close," he replied. "I could see better at a distance."

Nacha eyed him searchingly for a few moments, and a faint smile appeared on her lips again.

"I don't believe a word of that, but it was a nice thing for you to say. I like the way you talk, so let's be friends." She held out a dainty hand from the folds of the gorgeous yellow robe. Savill took it and, on sudden thought, bent and touched it with his lips. This obviously pleased her, yet she gave him a wondering look as the crowd enveloped her.

The detective smiled at the incident and proceeded to inspect the gathering anew. He saw Chu-Chen at one of the tables, no longer the modernized Chinaman, but clothed in a magnificently embroidered cloak of red and black. The tables were evidently now beginning their real stretch of business for the evening, as the groups seemed more intent upon the games and the chips were stacked much higher.

Feeling that he could gain no more information from the gambling-room, Savill resolved upon a bolder step. He went out, retrieved his things from the coatroom, and retraced his way down the long corridor to the foot of the winding staircase. Here he paused and looked back and upward. No one was in sight. Quietly he began to climb the stairs, holding fast to the railing and keeping his ears open for the slightest footstep. He gained the top and stood still, listening. All was as silent as the grave; he could not even hear a sound from the vast room below.

For a full minute he waited, and then turned his attention to a door that had caught his notice upon his arrival. It was situated directly at the head of the staircase, and seemed to lead to the street floor. He hesitated, and then resolved to investigate. The detective felt the necessity of learning something tangible in the course of the evening. The gaming-salon below had yielded scant information about the drugs,

and Savill favored action, even at great risk.

He tiptoed over to the door and carefully pressed his ear against it. Nothing could be heard inside. Gently he tried the knob. It worked, and he opened the door just the fraction of an inch. All was dark inside, and he opened it wider and stepped over the threshold, keeping his hold on the knob.

Suddenly he heard steps coming up the stairs. Quick as a flash he closed the door and waited behind it, ready for any emergency, with his hand on his gun. The steps came to the top, and Savill relaxed his position as the sound continued down the passageway to the front of the house.

He looked around as his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness. Some light came through two large windows which overlooked the back yard. He took a few steps, and saw that the windows opened upon a wide porch, from which steps led down to the ground. Clear moonlight made the court entirely visible. It was quite empty. Back of the yard and towering over the house loomed the immense wall of the Riverside Drive embankment, throwing an air of utter solitude over the regions below. Savill could hear a mingling of sounds from the river, which he knew was not more than a stone's throw away.

When Savill turned back into the room he saw that it was a sort of living-room, with paneled walls adorned with Chinese scrolls. The furniture consisted of a few chairs, a cabinet and an elaborate table which stood in the center. The floor was covered with a heavy rug, which made it possible for the detective to move about noiselessly. He went from one side to another, carefully feeling his way. Then he tried the doors of the cabinet, but they were locked and did not yield.

The detective was not in the room long before he became aware of the overpowering odor of incense, which he immediately judged to be burning in the next room. Listening at the communicating door, he could hear no sign of life beyond it. Next he reached for the knob, and was just about to turn it when a softly modulated voice behind him said:

"Well?"

The detective turned like lightning and found a figure in a yellow robe calmly surveying him.

It was Nacha!

For a tense moment, every faculty alert, Savill looked at her. How she had entered the room he had no idea. She coolly waited for him to speak, a half-amused expression on her face. The detective determined to combine audacity with quick wit to save himself.

"I think your curios here are simply splendid," he said, indicating the vases and carvings which stood upon the table; "I could not resist looking around. A place like this is so uncommon, you know. I hope I haven't bothered you?"

"Oh, no," she answered. "It is so interesting to have callers who tiptoe about and listen at the doors."

Savill felt the blood rush to his face with chagrin at being caught, and was thankful for the darkness of the room that hid it. He realized that the woman was toying with him as a cat plays with a trapped mouse.

"I think you are rather fortunate," said Nacha, "in picking my rooms to inspect. Somehow, I think Chu-Chen would take offense if he knew it."

The woman's suave tones only slightly covered the cold threat in the mention of the Chinese manager. She seemed to want to talk, but made no effort to switch on the light; so the two confronted each other in the semi-darkness in their battle of wits. She delighted in hinting what would befall the intruder were he discovered by the Chinaman.

"Chu-Chen has very bad habits," she continued. "Perhaps because the river is so near. It is a great temptation."

"And I suppose you are going to give your amiable friend another chance to yield to his temptation?" he sneered.

"Oh, I don't know," said the woman in a tantalizing voice. "I might call him in, and then, again, I might not. The water must be terribly cold tonight. It would be a shame to make you so uncomfortable."

The detective's eyes were on the long windows, and he calculated his chances in making a rush for them. He did not want to beat such a retreat except as a last resort, for it would prevent his ever entering the house again, and his usefulness in this case would be gone. He thought he had a chance of brazening his way out of the situation, so he stood his ground.

"I quite agree with you," he said coolly. "Besides, it would be hardly hospitable of you to bring all that on a stranger who was merely too highly interested in your curious house."

"Did the stranger not feel it dangerous to trespass in such a peculiar manner?"

"Perhaps he would have," he replied, "but his adventurous spirit was too strong."

"Ah, lots of things happen to spirits too dangerous. When they go too far, they just disappear—pouf! like a bubble. And they are never heard of again."

"How terrible," Savill commented, smiling grimly. "I shall have to mend my ways."

"If you ever get the chance," was the ominous reply.

Savill was about to respond when a sound brought them both on the alert, with every nerve strained—listening. Footsteps were coming up the stairway, not one, but several, and they were mounting as fast as they could rush. It appeared to be a race for the top, and inarticulate voices mingled with the sound of feet.

With a sudden grasp Nacha thrust the detective toward a window and threw it open.

"Go out back," she whispered. "Hide!"

Then, as she closed the window, Savill found himself alone on the back porch. He took one hasty glance around and sprang to the shadow of a pillar. He had a sense of danger impending. From his retreat he carefully peered out upon the court, and saw that it was all closed in by a ten-foot wall, over which projected the roof of a neighboring garage. He wondered whether he could scale the wall and whither it would lead him.

Suddenly from Nacha's room came the report of a pistol shot, followed by a hoarse scream. The detective's hand closed upon the butt of his automatic, and he moved about, undecided which way to go. Finally he turned to the courtyard, and with a start saw that something interesting was happening.

Black figures were dropping over the back fence by twos and threes and scurrying to the basement windows. Within a tumult was rapidly arising, with shouts and yells and the crashing of furniture, punctuated now and then by a shot.

It was probably a Federal raid.

The detective drew his weapon and stepped back into the room whence he had come. He wondered where Nacha was. He found the room empty, so he made his way down the hall to the front door, where he found several men on guard and the colored attendant quaking in a chair. Savill displayed his shield and spoke to the guards.

"Have you got them all?"

"I dunno," one man responded. "Sounds as if there's trouble downstairs. They're raisin' hell, and no mistake."

Savill ran back to the top of the winding stairway, and was about to descend when he caught sight of a familiar yellow robe through the door of the dancer's room. He pushed the door wider and was amazed to see Nacha calmly putting on her shoes. She still wore the brilliant Oriental wrap, but her hair had been gathered up under a small fashionable hat.

The detective remembered her impulse to save him and stepped hastily toward her.

"Quick!" he exclaimed. "Get out of here. The back yard is clear. I'll help you over the wall."

Nacha slowly looked up at him, and smiled her tantalizing smile.

"Do you want to return my favor?" she asked.

"Yes," said the detective. "But you must hurry. The Federal agents will be up here any minute."

"You are nice to want to help me," she said, making no effort to move. "But I don't want to go. There is a lot of excitement going on here and, you see, I am adventurous, too."

"But you will be sure to be arrested."

The girl merely shrugged her shoulders and finished lacing up her shoes. Then she stood up and slipped off the yellow robe, revealing a trim suit of dark street clothes.

"Will you hurry?" demanded Savill impatiently.

"I am not going, I told you," she expostulated.

Savill looked at her in despair as a heavy shuffling came up the stairs and Chu-Chen appeared, scowling and grunting, between two stalwart officers. A heavily built man followed them and, sighting Savill and Nacha, entered the room.

"Hello—who's this?" he asked the girl.

Savill took a step forward and produced his badge.

"Oh, one of the City men," said the heavy man, and then to Nacha: "Come along, Miss Cotillo. We've got them all lined up downstairs. You had better clear out now."

"Miss what?" exclaimed Savill, his mouth agape.

The other man turned on him.

"Miss Tessa Cotillo," he said. "One of the cleverest on the Federal staff. She has been on this job for more than a year. Tell your Chief he needn't bother any further with these birds, as we've caught the whole gang."

MAIL ROBBERIES NOT PROFITABLE

MAIL robberies may be spectacular but not profitable, Rush D. Simmons, chief post-office inspector, asserted concerning the recent Chicago hold-up, when securities variously estimated from $1,000,000 to $2,000,000 were taken after a gas barrage. The hold-up has been solved, the culprits captured, and a large part of the loot recovered.

Losses from the robbery of mail trains and other postal agencies from 1921 to 1923, inclusive, amounted to $11,217,209. The Federal authorities recovered in that time $7,200,192, leaving an actual loss in three years of $4,017,017. That sum is, of course, infinitesimal compared with valuables worth millions of dollars that passed through the mails in the course of the period.

The government transmits more than 500,000,000 postage stamps by mail each year, without the loss of so much as a two-cent stamp. The government also transmits all manner of war savings stamps, Treasury notes; and the whole of the Liberty bond issues went through the mail without loss.

For many years the results of holdups have shown that chances favoring the bandit are 11 per cent., against 89 per cent. for the government. Since in those cases where holdups are frustrated the robbers frequently suffer bullet wounds—some ending fatally—before capture, the work may conservatively said to be a hazardous occupation, according to Mr. Simmons.

Trial in Federal courts for mail bandits is therefore a serious matter, and convictions are the rule, with maximum sentence imposed. The idea is to make the mails an almost sacred institution, and the underworld has a wholesome respect for the detective ability as well as the perseverance of the United States Post-office inspector, who has probably more resources available in his work than any other type of investigator or detective in the world.

As an instance of the long memories of these officials Mr. Simmons pointed to the case of James Johnson, alias "Portland Red." He is listed as one of the most experienced safecrackers known. "Red" was arrested on August 14, 1919, at Danbury, N. C., on an indictment covering the burglary of the post-office at Plymouth, N. C., on June 13, 1918. He is now in the state penitentiary at Raleigh, N. C., serving a fourteen-year term

The Devilish Contrivance

By MAURICE COONS

CHAPTER ONE

"WELL, Tommy, what you doin' here?" rasped a deep, rough voice.

Tommy Griffin, gunman and high-class burglar, stopped short and looked about while his hand leaped into his side coat-pocket. At first he could see nothing, then as his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom he discerned a bulky figure approaching through a dark alley which led off at right angles from the street along which he had been walking.

Silent, but ready for instant action, he awaited calmly while the newcomer came closer. Then he recognized the man with the rasping voice who had hailed him by name. It was Bill Vance, commonly known to his friends and enemies as 'The Hog,' because of his propensity for grabbing the largest share of the loot. Tommy looked upon Bill Vance with about the same esteem a duke has for the wretch who cleans his boots. Vance was only an ordinary hold-up man and petty thief, while Tommy was dapper and confined his attention to safes, big jewel robberies and similar hazardous but profitable undertakings.

"Well," he said brusquely, as the other reached his side, 'what do you want?"

"Want to talk to you a minute," growled Vance. "It's for your own good, too."

"Humph!" grunted Tommy contemptuously. "Well, go ahead."

"You've tipped me off to several good lays, and I don't want to see you get bumped off while you're so young."

"Get to the point," snapped the gunman impatiently.

"The point is this: If you try to get hold of old Wan Lung's fortune, you'll end up like that fellow they found in the river last week."

"I'm not after Wan Lung's fortune. What ever got such a fool idea in your bean?"

"Oh, I'm not as simple as you think," answered Vance. "I've seen you runnin' around with that good-lookin' Chinee daughter of his."

"Well, can't a fellow take a girl out occasionally without bein' suspected of wantin' to rob her old man?"

"Some fellows can, but a fellow with your reputation *can't*. No, Tommy, when you hang around a skirt there's a method in your madness. You know old Wan Lung is one of the richest men in New Orleans, and you're after some of his kale. But I know some things about that dump of his that you *don't*."

"Indeed!" said Tommy, trying to appear unconcerned. "If you really do know anything that I don't, it's the first time in your life."

"Well, I do, and I'm going to tell you for your own good. That old Chinaman made a fortune selling dope and stolen curios. Every purchaser is required to pay him in cash or precious stones. And it's a known fact that he never banks any money. Consequently he must have all his dough around the house."

"I figured all that out long ago," snapped Tommy. "Is that all you've got to tell?"

"I should say not. You may have read in the papers a week ago about a fellow being found dead in the river, whose death hadn't been caused by drowning?"

"Yes, but what's that got to do with it?"

"Last week he and I cooked up a plan to rob old Wan Lung. Saturday night about

twelve o'clock we went down to pull the job. This fellow—his name was Jerry Saunders—said he knew where the Chinaman's stuff was. He wanted me along to help if there was a fight. We got up on the roof, and crawled over it till we got to a trap-door that leads down into a room. I was to stay on the roof with my gun drawn ready to shoot anybody that came into the room, while Jerry was down getting the stuff. The first part of the scheme worked fine. We got the trap-door open, and Jerry flashed his light around the room. There was nobody there, so he shut it off and climbed down. In a minute or so I heard a couple of clicks, then Jerry screamed, 'Oh, my God! Something bit me!' I was kinder scared. I slammed the trap-door shut and beat it. The next morning the police found Jerry in the river, and the coroner said he had died from some kind of poison."

Tommy laughed.

"Say, Vance, where'd you get that home-made hootch, anyway? You're dreamin', old boy, dreamin'. You couldn't dig up enough nerve in a million years to try to pull a stunt like that."

He laughed again and strolled on down Chartres street in the direction of Wan Lung's house.

CHAPTER TWO

"I'VE been expecting this," said Chief of Detectives Moloney, as he coolly looked over the gruesome spectacle before him. On a long, cold, marble slab lay the still form of a young man. The natty clothes were wrinkled and shrunken from long immersion in water, and his face and neck were a strange blue color. Although the body had been found that morning in the Mississippi River just below the Jahncke dry-dock, the coroner said the man's death had not been caused by drowning, but by some poison, as yet unidentified.

"What ever made you think Tommy Griffin was going to get bumped off, Chief?" asked Detective Horton, who had accompanied his superior to the morgue.

"I had a tip a few days ago that he was runnin' around with that pretty daughter of Wan Lung's. And you know Tommy never wasted his time with any woman, much less a Chinese gal, unless there was something big in it."

Horton nodded slowly. "That's a fact. He sure did go in for only the big hauls."

"And he usually got 'em, too. But in this case he met up with a man who beat him at his own game. Wan Lung's got enough brains for a dozen such crooks."

"Do you think the old Chinaman put him out of the way?"

"Absolutely. He knew Tommy was after either his daughter or his money, and as he thinks an awful lot of both, he croaked Tommy and saved both his daughter and his fortune. At least it looks that way to me, judging by the evidence."

"The old devil!" exclaimed Horton. "Chief, do you think he's as rich as some people say?"

"Sure he is. I could be, too, if I ran a business like this—selling dope, stolen art treasures and Oriental curios. God knows how he gets his stuff into this country—the customs men would give a good deal to know that—but he does get it in, and he makes his customers pay for the risk he takes. Oh, he's rich, all right. When he was under suspicion we checked up on him, but never found he had a bank account. I have an idea that Tommy Griffin found the hiding-place of his cash."

"And you suspect that the old Chink bumped Tommy off before he could get away with the stuff?"

"Exactly. But I can't guess how it was accomplished. If he was shot or stabbed it would be plain enough. But poisoned—that rather gets my goat."

"Maybe the girl poisoned him," suggested Horton hopefully.

"Not a chance," retorted Moloney quickly. "Tommy had too much sense for anything like that. He wasn't born yesterday. No, sir; Johnny just ran into some thing he wasn't expecting, that's all—some devilish contrivance nailed him. What it was we don't know, but we're going to find out."

"Say, Chief," said Horton suddenly, "do

you remember that fellow who was found a week ago pretty close to where Tommy was?"

"Yes."

"Well, he was in almost the same condition—had been in the water for hours, was blue in the face, and poison had been the cause of his death. Why, the two cases are exactly alike."

"Why shouldn't they be?" asked Moloney quietly.

"Then you think——" began Horton.

"I'm convinced that Wan Lung killed both of them, and for the same reason. The other man was Jerry Saunders, quite a well-known thug and small hold-up man. He had been going with the old crook's daughter for two weeks before his sudden death."

"That girl's sweethearts sure have bad luck, don't they?" said Horton.

"Rather," answered Moloney, a grim smile playing about his usually impassive face. "That fact ought to interest you, too, Horton, because you're going to be her next suitor."

CHAPTER THREE

A well-dressed young man walked slowly down Chartres street later that day, turned at St. Mark's, walked a half-block toward the river, slunk into an alley, and knocked at a doorway set deep in a gloomy recess. To the fat, stupid-looking Chinaman who answered Detective Horton handed a small card with the request that it be submitted to his master. The Chinaman bowed, closed the door, and Horton heard a spring lock snap. Evidently no chances were taken with unknown strangers.

Presently the Chinaman returned, all smiles. He bowed almost to the ground as he ushered the detective into a combination office and library. Horton looked about. The room was a strange mixture of Orient and Occident. In one corner was a golden oak typewriter desk and a steel filing-cabinet; in the other squatted a huge, grinning Buddha, fashioned in bronze. Scattered about were beautiful tapestries, vases and objects of carved ivory and jade. But to Horton the most important thing in the room was a girl seated at the desk operating a typewriter with Occidental speed and precision. At a low-voiced query from the servant, she glanced up and smiled. Horton gasped. A beauty! Chinese, to be sure, but possessed of a velvety complexion, liquid dark eyes, and a winning smile that any white girl might envy. She was unusually light for an Oriental; possibly her mother had been a white woman. Here was a girl who had no need of a wealthy father in order to have admirers.

"You have come to buy jade?" she queried in the precise English of the alien who has studied long and earnestly.

"Yes," answered Horton, but he flushed. It was hard to lie to such innocent, trustful eyes as those. Surely this girl could not be a murderer!

"Very well. You shall see my father at once." She spoke a few words in Chinese to the servant and turned back to her work.

The Chinaman opened a door and led the way into a room to the rear. Horton followed, then paused and stared at the sheer splendor of the apartment. On every hand gleamed the most gorgeous opulence the Orient could offer. Wonderful gold and silver tapestries, depicting horribly repulsive dragons in pursuit of all manner of people and animals, lined the walls. The finest of Oriental rugs, thick, soft and colorful, covered the floors. Hideous, grinning idols of every conceivable size, shape and material were in every part of the room. Case after case were filled with priceless enamel vases. Choice lacquer work, some of it inlaid in intricate patterns with mother-of-pearl, and objects fashioned with inconceivable skill and patience, from the finest jade of all colors. The place was a veritable treasure-house of priceless art. But over all hung a profound silence while a heavy, stifling incense pervaded the atmosphere. Horton shivered in spite of himself, and coughed.

"You come to buy jade?" rasped a harsh voice in strongly accented English.

The detective had not seen any one yet,

but now that he looked it was easy to see where the voice had come from. On a sort of raised platform at the rear of the room rested a couch-like affair draped with silken coverings. Here, wrapped in a gorgeous silk robe, reclined a tall, angular Chinaman smoking a long, poisonous-looking pipe. Horton approached and smiled nervously.

"You are Mr.—er—Wan Lung?"

"Yes," answered the Chinaman, rising to a sitting position. Leisurely he consulted a small card in his left hand, then: "And you are Mr. Anthony?"

"I am." Horton could see now that the Chinaman was probably fifty years of age, with stiff black hair graying at the temples, piercing black eyes and a shrunken, mummy-like face.

"I am glad to see you," he continued, extending a shriveled hand with yellow, parchment-like skin, and extraordinarily long finger-nails. "Any one who knows my friend Wu Ting is always welcome in my humble abode."

Horton accepted the proffered hand and thanked his lucky stars that Chief Moloney had enough on Wu Ting to be able to force the old rascal to do anything the official desired. A pleasant hour Horton spent in examining the hundreds of wonderful art objects. But at the end of that time he knew no more about Wan Lung than he had at the beginning. The man was inscrutable—uncannily so. Deliberately he passed from case to case, handling the little carvings with reverent deftness, always suave and courteous. But at times Horton noticed the sharp black eyes fairly burn into his and he could imagine the thoughts and questions racing behind that high, wrinkled forehead. At length the detective selected a carving, the cheapest that had been shown him, and drew out his pocketbook.

"This room is dedicated to art," said the Chinaman. "It shall never be profaned by an exchange of money. I handle my business in another apartment. This way, please."

He pulled back a gorgeous blue-and-gold tapestry, revealing a narrow doorway, and stepped through it. Horton followed eagerly, anxious to see everything possible. But he was disappointed. There was nothing mysterious about this inner room—it was small and contained only a large, flat-topped desk, a very small safe and a huge figure of a squatting Buddha, the latter quite dominating the room. He paid over the required amount in cash, accepting his purchase, which the Chinaman wrapped carefully for him and waited expectantly. Perhaps he would get a clue as to where Wan Lung kept his money. But no! The old Chinaman rose, leaving the cash lying on the desk, escorted his visitor out into the display room and watched carefully while the detective made his exit.

In the outer office Horton spent a pleasant half-hour becoming acquainted with Wan Lung's daughter, and when he finally left he had her promise to attend a motion picture show with him the following evening. That was some progress, but after all he had made only one discovery of worth—there was a sky-light in the room of the huge Buddha.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOR two weeks Detective Morton courted the Chinese girl assiduously. He took her out every evening and oftentimes saw her during the day; but after all his time and trouble he had found out only one thing—that she was as thoroughly charming as he had thought her to be. Frequently, as he questioned her carefully, trying to trap her into admitting something out of the way, he felt ashamed and inclined to throw up the job; but he steeled his heart with the mental plea that duty—no matter how distasteful—must be fulfilled, and justice—no matter how harsh—must be done.

But the girl was baffling. Not a single incriminating word could he draw from her. She talked easily of Tommy Griffin and Jerry Saunders, and seemed to suspect no wrong in connection with them. Either she was entirely innocent or consummately clever. His heart told him to believe the former; his brain the latter.

While torn between these two beliefs he decided upon a definite but summary course of action. He said nothing to his Chief,

for he knew he would not countenance it, but set out at midnight one night, attired in dark clothes, cap and tennis shoes, for the home of Wan Lung. Arrived there, he cautiously mounted to the roof of an adjoining building, worked his way toward the rear until he judged he must be somewhere near the skylight, then crossed over to the roof of the Chinaman's residence. An instant's probing in the dark and he found the skylight. But it was impossible to see into the room below—the glass panes were covered with boards nailed firmly to the sash.

It was evident that Wan Lung preferred to be unobserved. Horton swore under his breath and hauled out his flashlight. Shielding the glow under his cap, he examined the skylight carefully. It was secured with a padlock, but the hasp was old and rusty and the wood around the staples was loose and rotten.

He looked at his watch. Twelve-thirty. Every one in the house must be in bed. Taking a screwdriver from his hip-pocket, he set to work. In five minutes he had all the fastenings pried loose. Carefully he lifted the skylight and laid it down on the roof. The aged, rusty hinges creaked ominously, and he paused a moment in breathless silence. But all was still. Quickly he flashed his light around the room below. Everything was in place—he could see nothing that looked to be dangerous. He sat down on the roof and prepared to descend, feet first. He hadn't the slightest idea what he would find; he wasn't even positive in his own mind as to what he was hunting. He only knew that there was something queer about this old house—some unsolved mystery that sent men to their deaths—and he meant to run it to earth tonight.

Suddenly there came the sound of a door slamming somewhere in the house. Horton sat still and listened. Again a door slammed, this time much closer; then came the patter of approaching footsteps. The detective scrambled back out of sight. There was no time to close the skylight, and he prayed fervently that whoever was coming would fail to look up. Next there came a little click, the room below was flooded with light, and Wan Lung walked into Horton's line of vision.

The old Chinaman was, as usual, dressed in a gorgeous silk robe, and carried his long, poisonous-looking pipe. He walked straight to the huge Buddha. Carefully he pressed some of the ornamental carvings, and Horton gasped in amazement, for a section of the metallic face, possibly eight inches square, swung outward like a miniature door. Wan Lung reached into his pocket, then quickly deposited something in the aperture, closed the door and left the room, snapping out the lights behind him. Horton smiled. So that was where Wan Lung kept his hoard—in the head of his huge Buddha? Well, that was one time when an idol served a good purpose. Indeed a clever idea—who would have ever suspected it?

He hunched forward, projected his feet and legs into the room and allowed his body to follow until only his finger-tips were grasping the edges of the roof. A moment he hung suspended like the pendulum of a clock, then dropped to the floor, landing lightly on the balls of his rubber-soled shoes. Again he brought his flash-light into play. No longer was he working aimlessly; he had a definite object in view now. He would investigate this secret hiding-place; there might be some incriminating evidence there.

Slowly the circular spot of yellow light moved over the figure of the squat, ugly idol, then came to rest on the ornamentations which he believed Wan Lung had manipulated. Cautiously he reached out and touched them. Nothing happened. He pressed harder. From somewhere within the idol came the sound of a faint click. He looked up. For a single instant the hideous face seemed to leer at him mockingly, then the little door swung slowly outward as it had done for Wan Lung.

He hesitated a moment while a strangely repulsive odor—damp and musty and nauseating like that of an ancient tomb—assailed his nostrils. A queer feeling of awe and impending doom had taken hold of him. Somehow it seemed sacrilegious for a detective to open the symbol of one of the greatest religions on earth to search for evi-

dence. But Horton was a hard-headed American, not a disciple of fear and superstition. In a moment his curiosity and sense of duty triumphed over his spiritual misgivings and he reached forward.

Then his throat suddenly constricted; his heart seemed to abdicate its duties; his hand paused in mid-air. What was that moving within the idol's head? He leaned forward and looked closer. Framed by the sides of the opening, gently swaying back and forth, was the head of a large snake, a deadly-looking head of a dull gray color, the red forked tongue darting rapidly in and out, the small, beady black eyes glittering menacingly. He noted these details as he retreated a step or two and reached for his gun.

Without warning the serpent coiled and launched itself outward. But Horton had been watching carefully, all but hypnotized by the cold, merciless stare of the reptile's eyes. Now, summoning every atom of his agility, he leaped aside. And not a fraction of a second too soon. He felt the snake whiz over his shoulder, then he whirled and fired his gun blindly. He had no hope of hitting the reptile; it was merely an uncontrollable impulse for self-preservation. Never had he been more terrified. His throat was dry and his breath seemed to refuse to go lower than his collar-bone. Had his foe been a man he would have welcomed the encounter; but to have for an adversary a snake, a venomous reptile that made no noise, and struck fatally without any warning—ugh!

His pistol cocked and ready for instant action, he swung his light about. Inquisitively, the long, yellow beam poked about under the furniture and explored nooks and corners. But the snake was not to be seen—it had completely disappeared. At the same moment some one behind the detective snatched the revolver out of his hand and uttered a subdued chuckle.

CHAPTER FIVE

DETECTIVE HORTON started at the sound from the rear and swung his flash in that direction. He jumped as the circular spot of light came to rest on the countenance of Wan Lung. The old Chinaman was standing in the doorway, an evilly-triumphant grin resting on his shrunken features, the detective's revolver clenched firmly in the long yellow talons of his right hand.

"Ah-ha! Mr. Horton," he said mockingly; "you so interested in my girl, eh? I think you more interested in her father's money."

Horton only started dumbly—he was trembling from head to foot.

"You had very pretty gun," continued the Chinaman. "I think I shall be able to use him very nicely."

Horton glared at him a moment. He dared not resist, deprived of his gun.

"I suppose you know I have very large fortune," the Chinaman went on sneeringly.

"Yes," said Horton, finding his voice at last, "but my God, Wan Lung, this devilish contrivance," with a helpless gesture in the direction of the idol.

"Is it not good plan?" asked the Chinaman, grinning. "I feel sure some one hear of Wan Lung's fortune and come find it, so I have very fine snakes sent to me from Asia. One I keep there in big Buddha, the others I keep down in cellar. And I am not disappointed. Many people come get my fortune, but all they get is little greeting from my guard and nice bath in river. And to be sure there is plenty poison I change snakes after every attempt." He chuckled grimly. "I shall have to put in new one in the morning."

Horton shivered. A man capable of such cold-blooded, diabolical scheming was incomprehensible to him. "But you!" he gasped incoherently. "How?——"

"I might have known you would ask," continued Wan Lung. "They all do. My fortune is down in belly of Buddha. When I wish to put something in or take something out, I just lift off head, after I have made some adjustments, of course, with my little guard shoved in side compartment where he do me no harm. When I finish I put him back, and everything all right. I don't mind telling you now, for you never be able to use information." He chuckled again.

"But I saw you——" gasped the detective.

"Oh, yes, they all do. I always show gentlemen how to get my fortune. It makes them so sure that they never stop to investigate. I have nice little burglar alarm on my roof. When any one disturb skylight it ring in my room. I come right in, open Buddha, throw in piece of paper or something, shut him up, and go away again. I wish to be sure that stranger will meet my snake. Chinamen not so stupid as you think."

"I'll say they're not," muttered Horton to himself.

"Next you shall have little bath in great Mississippi," said Wan Lung grimly. "And tomorrow your picture be in papers, but you will not know about it."

Suddenly his hand reached out toward a small button on the left side of the doorway.

Horton's situation was desperate. He looked about nervously. But there was nothing he could do, unless he wished to be killed and thrown into the river. He could only accept what was handed him. His thoughts were suddenly disturbed by a terrible scream from Wan Lung. He looked up quickly. The Chinaman's gun had dropped to his side, and he was looking downward in agonized terror. The detective's glance followed. Ah! no wonder Wan Lung was terror-stricken. The snake was lying on the floor at his feet, its ugly head resting flat against the Chinaman's bare ankle. Frantically he kicked, trying to rid himself of the reptile. But the poison fangs had sunk deep, and they held fast.

Horton made a rush, secured his gun, edged around to the side and began firing at the reptile. At the second shot the head disappeared, shattered into a hundred pieces, but the damage was done. The Chinaman's body was stiffening, and his eyes were glazing rapidly.

"My daughter knows nothing about this," gasped Wan Lung. "Please say nothing." He slipped a large, beautiful ruby ring from his finger. "This for your silence," he said, handing it to the detective. "Only tell her that all my fortune is for her—and—good-by."

His eyes closed, his head dropped forward on his chest and he lapsed into unconsciousness. In a few minutes he was dead. Never again would the customs officials be troubled by the wily brain of Wan Lung.

CUSTOMS HOUSE SLEUTHS

CUSTOMS inspectors found more than $100,000 worth of unmanifested goods, including liquor, heroin, cocaine, morphine, silks, laces, lingerie, jewelry and unbrellas aboard the steamship *Conte Verdi* after a ten-hour search of the vessel. The seized articles were taken to the appraisers' stores. Ship's officers and members of the crew denied all knowledge of them.

Among the articles discovered were two large paintings of World War scenes, done in oil, which aroused the admiration of the searchers, although they did not recognize the artist nor were they able to place any definite value as to what they were worth. Thomas W. Whittle, surveyor of the port, received information from a confidential source that the ship contained a tremendously valuable assortment of goods which smugglers would try to dispose of here without paying duty.

Fifteen men under Customs Inspector H. H. Zorzer were sent to the pier.

The customs men pursued their inquiries among the crew with lack of success, and then set to work on their own hook to search the ship. It took them ten hours to unearth the treasure.

Bogus Money

By TOM FOX (*Scotland Yard Detective*)

A SHORT time ago Secret Service agents smashed one of the most powerful counterfeiting plots in American crime. The trail started from a coffee house in Broome street, New York, in which a double killing occurred. The detectives state that this café had been the headquarters of the counterfeiting conspiracy, and its owner, one of the ring-leaders, was put under a $25,000 bond. The place was known as The Croca de Savola. An Italian named Joe Pepi was shot and an innocent bystander, Louis Rango, was also murdered there. Pepi was the leader of Harlem's "Little Italy." It was said that he was worth a half-million, and fearing assassination, he always had two bodyguards with him. These alleged friends double-crossed him on the day of the shooting, for as he crossed the café threshold some one opened fire on him and he fell with three bullets in his back. A war resulted from this murder, which ended in a dozen killigs.

Chief among the victims was Vincent Terranava or Morelli. He was a nephew of Ignatizo Pupo, known as "Pupo, the Wolf." Terranava was killed on May 8, 1922, and a woman, four men and a girl were shot as a result of his assassination.

The theory of the detectives was that counterfeiters "shoved the queer" to the bootleggers and narcotic smugglers, who in turn circulated the bogus money here and abroad. Federal agents believed that the counterfeiters were not linked with the bootleggers in a business way, but often did some rum smuggling themselves as an additional occupation.

When the rumrunners received bogus money from the counterfeiters they figured that a man engaged in an illegal business could not complain to the police that he had been paid in spurious banknotes. The evidence in linking the counterfeiters with the bootleggers is said to have convinced the authorities that some of the murder cases will now be solved. It is further alleged that the jointure of these crooks has caused the distribution throughout the world of one million dollars of bogus money.

Counterfeit banknotes presumedly given to the rum and dope smugglers have turned up in Hamburg, Liverpool, Austria and Egypt, as well as in the Bahama Islands, and have caused fifteen arrests abroad.

The Secret Service has sent a warning that any one found passing any of the estimated million dollars of bogus money would be arrested as an accessory after the fact. The following is a list of the spurious banknotes:

Federal Reserve Bank $2.00.
Indian Head Silver Certificate $5.00.
Ozone National Park Bank, L. I., $10.00.
National City Bank, Grand Rapids, Mich., $20.00.

Not long ago two children passed a $20.00 counterfeit in Detroit which led to the first clue in the investigation of these fake banknotes. Although a great many more bills were passed during the following months no arrests were then made. The sleuths did not molest any one temporarily.

Of course each individual was spotted so that he could be picked up at any time in the future. This was done so that the Government's secret investigations would not be disclosed and would lead the operatives to the members of the gang.

In all cases where the country is flooded with bogus money every effort is made to gather up the counterfeits and destroy them.

A Test of Conscience

By J. B. WARRENTON

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

ROBERT DUCEY was given a hearing the following day, and, as always in murder cases, was held for the grand jury. He he was lacking in funds, the court appointed counsel for him, and the trial began ten days afterward. As no new evidence had been uncovered for either the State or the defendant, the twelve men good and true found him guilty of murder in the first degree. He was remanded to jail to await sentence. Then, as far as the general public was concerned, the whole affair was a closed book until he was sentenced.

But there was one man, officially connected with the case, who still kept the matter vivid in his memory. That man was Dan Farley. Before the bank clerk's conviction, he had worked day and night to clear up the case, one way or the other. But his work was in vain. In a brief talk with the Chief he frankly remarked:

"I am not sure that young Ducey committed that crime, Chief, but as no new evidence was forthcoming in his favor, the jury couldn't do otherwise than find him guilty."

Days grew into weeks—days and weeks of sorrow for Mildred Hixon. She found solace in the tireless attention of Doctor Paul. Hardly a day passed that he did not call, bringing flowers and often accompanying her to the jail to see young Ducey.

"Cheer up, Bob," the doctor said when the guard called time and they were taking their leave, "we'll get you out of this yet. Don't worry about Mildred, I'll see that she's well cared for."

Then came the girl's third blow. Seth Hixon died intestate, and when his affairs had been fully investigated, to the surprise of all that knew him, he was found to be bankrupt. Not a single dollar did he have in the bank, and when what few loans he had out were paid, the money was attached by creditors. The building, furniture and everything in the store went under the hammer to pay his debts. Mildred was practically homeless, compelled to seek the aid of friends until she could find employment.

A few days before the financial condition of Seth Hixon's affairs were made public, indulgent and sympathetic Doctor Paul asked Mildred to marry him. He told her that he had always loved her and only held back the words that sprang to his lips by the thought that she loved young Ducey. He knew, he confessed, that it didn't appear just proper on the surface to be urging marriage at a time when she was in deep sorrow.

Mildred listened in silence. Although she did not love the doctor, his kindness and thoughtfulness since her double bereavement touched her tender heart keenly. She loved young Ducey, and believing his case to be hopeless, after a struggle with her emotions, she consented to marry Paul.

"But we must wait for several months, Doctor," she told him. "My father's death and Robert's plight must be considered."

"As long as you like, darling," accorded the doctor, embracing her and imprinting a kiss on her cold lips. "Whenever you say."

Two days later the *Daily Record* published a full column of the late Seth Hixon's financial tangle, also announcing the sale. Doctor Paul was eating dinner in a local hotel when his eyes encountered the star-

tling news. Several diners looked up from their plates as the doctor uttered an oath and sprang to his feet, nearly upsetting the table in the sudden movement. Calling a waiter, he received his check. Planting his hat firmly on his head, he rushed from the room, never halting until he stood before Mildred Hixon, who had hurried to the door to greet him. Her smile faded when she looked at his scowling visage.

"What does this mean, Mildred?" he asked almost fiercely, holding the paper before her and pointing a shaking finger at the column of news. "Does it mean that your father has left you penniless?"

"That's just what it means, Doctor," responded the girl with some spirit. "Are you alarmed by the news?"

"Oh—no," he stammered, abashed at the show of courage in the homeless girl, "only you—you know——"

"I know enough," interjected Mildred, removing a ring from her finger and holding it out to him. "I know enough to thank God I escaped making the greatest mistake in my life. I know that our engagement is broken, and that my eyes are open now. Take this ring and leave here."

Doctor Paul knew better than to offer any explanation, even though he felt inclined to. He pocketed the ring, bowed low and took his leave. Mildred Hixon rushed inside, flung herself on the bed and sobbed. They were not tears of sorrow for her broken romance of a few seconds before; they were for the unfortunate man who was standing in the valley of the shadows.

CHAPTER FIVE

SEVERAL days later Doctor Paul returned to his office and found a note on the floor near the door. Picking it up, he walked to his desk and unfolded it. The paper was badly soiled, and the words thereon were written in lead pencil, and a bad scrawl at that. He frowned darkly as he read:

"DEER DOC,

"Yo musta forgot me. Don't kid yorself that yo can fool me. I saw. SOLLEY.

"What the devil does this mean?" he growled, turning the paper over and over, seeking for some mark to solve the mystery. Finding none, he crushed the paper in his clenched hand, stooping to cast it into the waste-basket beneath the desk. Then he stopped, on second thought, and threw it into a drawer.

That same afternoon Doctor Paul received another surprise. He was mulling over his broken engagement when the door opened and in walked Detective Dan Farley.

"Hello, Doctor," he greeted, extending his hand, and the doctor took it mechanically. "Just dropped in to have you look me over. Kind of under the weather. How are you, and how's Miss Hixon?"

Doctor Paul had arisen and was staring fixedly at the Headquarters man. Apparently Farley didn't look like a person much in need of medical aid. The doctor's first thought was to show him the mysterious note. But again he faltered. Why should he bother about a little thing like that.

Doctor Paul examined his lungs, heart and made a blood-pressure test.

"That's good," said Doctor Paul, as the Headquarters man laid a heavy book on the desk which he had raised in his hand in the cause of the test, "the other things were too light. That book sent your blood surging."

"Everything all right, Doctor?" Farley inquired, with much concern.

Doctor Paul was none too scrupulous when it came to fooling his patients. He was not overburdened with the good things of life, and needed every dollar he could get. He had found nothing wrong with the stalwart officer, but he was a doctor, and Farley was a policeman.

"Nothing to be alarmed about," said the doctor, seating himself at his desk and writing rapidly for several seconds. "Your blood pressure is high and your heart labors a little. I'll give you a few tablets and a tonic, and I think you'll be all right in a few days."

"Well, well, well," soliloquized Farley, adjusting his tie and preparing to leave, "I thought something was wrong with me. I'll come back in a few days. Good-day."

Two days later Doctor Paul was in receipt of another mysterious note. Like the first, he found it on the floor beneath the door. His face grew black as a thundercloud as he spread it out and perused it.

"DEER Doc,

"Don't think I'm foolin. I saw it done and yo'd better come across or my tong ill wag. Yo kno. SOLLEY."

"Damn him!" swore the doctor, casting the note in the drawer with the first one. "Who the devil is Solley? I wonder what he means? I'll tell Farley——"

He stopped, and walked to the window. His face was pale and drawn when he turned again.

Next day Police Detective Farley called again.

"Hello, Doctor," he saluted, throwing his huge form into the nearest chair, "how's things? I took your medicine, and think it's bringing me around all right. But you'd better look me over again, and see if I need any more."

Again Farley suffered the tapping, punching and mawling of the medical man. Again the doctor gave him tablets and a tonic.

"I'll be in again within a few days, Doctor," Farley announced at the door, "then I'll settle my bill. Good-day."

Again Doctor Paul regretted that he didn't show the Headquarters man the mysterious notes.

Two days before the court was to pass the sentence of death on Robert Ducey, Doctor Paul found the third dirty note beneath his door. His teeth clicked together, and his eyes narrowed as he unfolded it and read:

"DEER Doc,

"Dis is the last time dat I'm goin to rite. I must have 25 dollars tonite, or I'll go to some one dat will give it to me for what I kno. I had good eyes dat day but my tong wants to wag. 25 bucks tonite. Go to the post office, an drop it in the wast basket near the door. I'll be on hand to get it. No tricks now. Don't tell the bulls, cause if you do, my tong ill wag. 25 iron men tonite. 8 oclock. SOLLEY."

The doctor was still holding the threatening note in his hand when he heard footsteps outside the door. Quickly he thrust the letter into his coat pocket. The door swung open and Farley strode in.

"Hello, Doctor," he voiced the usual greeting. "Thought I'd run around and get a few more pills and pay my bill. What's the damage?"

The physician had entirely recovered his composure, whereupon he forced a smile and shook the Headquarters man's proffered hand.

"Well, sir," he lied, "I don't know that I should charge you anything. But of course, if you insist," he jested with a mirthless laugh, "your bill will be the amount of twenty dollars. Too much, Mr. Farley?"

"Lord, no," smiled Farley, delving in his pocket and hauling forth a good-sized roll of greenbacks. "I call that easy."

He pealed off a crisp twenty-dollar bill and laid it on the doctor's desk.

"Never mind the receipt; this is between gentlemen," the detective laughed.

Doctor Paul looked up quickly at the singular expression. Dan Farley's back was turned towards him, and he was gazing abstractedly at a painting on the wall.

A few seconds later the Headquarters man turned and picked up his hat. He adjusted it at a rakish angle on his head, walked to the door and paused.

"You don't look any too well yourself of late, Doctor," he remarked with seeming concern, his hand on the knob, his cold eyes centered on the other's drawn, pallid face. "Better look after your own health, instead of worrying about your patients. Maybe I know the symptoms," Farley chuckled as he swung open the door and stepped into the hallway. "Too bad the old man's affairs were in such a state when he kicked out. Good-day."

Long after the door closed behind the man from Police Headquarters, Doctor Paul

stared into space. Slowly he turned to where the twenty-dollar bill lay on his desk. It was a new one, clean and crisp. He fingered it hungrily, then slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

CHAPTER SIX

DOCTOR PAUL was in the act of unlocking his desk the morning following when the door of his office swung open and in walked Farley, another man trailing closely in his wake.

"Hello, Doctor," he smiled, extending his hand as usual. "Meet Inspector Garvin. I was telling him how good your medicine made me feel. Doctor Niles Paul, Inspector Tom Garvin."

Garvin was a colossal being, mild-eyed and had a lumbering gait. He moved slowly forward, extending a ham-like hand.

"Pleased ter know yer, Paul Niles," he grunted. "Pleased ter know yer."

The physician started at the change of his name. His jaws tightened and a greenish hue crept into his eyes. He opened his mouth to correct the error, but instead he grasped and shook Garvin's hand.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Garvin," Doctor Paul's voice was low and silky. "Why am I honored by this early call?"

Garvin moved away and took a seat near the door. Farley backed his huge body against the doctor's desk, his hands behind him.

"Tomorrow your friend Ducey comes up for sentence, Doctor," said Farley. "I suppose you know it?"

"Why, yes, Farley. Sure I know it. But I don't believe he's guilty."

"That's the truest belief you ever had, Doctor," agreed the officer, "I believe the same thing. Furthermore, we now know who *did* kill old Hixon."

Doctor Paul looked up at the speaker. Farley was toying with his heavy watch chain. The doctor's eyes strayed to the human hulk near the door. Garvin's eyes were closed.

"I'm mighty glad to hear that, Mr. Farley," said Doctor Paul. "You haven't taken him into custody yet, have you?"

"Not yet, Doctor, but we're going to at once." Farley was on his feet now, towering over the physician. The inert form seated near the door was now sitting erect, alert, watchful. "Paul Niles, you are under arrest for the murder of Seth Hixon. We've got you dead to rights, so you'd better make a clean breast of it. You know your rights and so forth, but a confession of the whole thing will make it easier for yourself. Why did you do it?"

The accused doctor threw back his head and laughed.

"Well, that's a good one, Farley," he chuckled. "Where the devil do you fit? You haven't got a thing on me, motive, or anything else. You're up against a real man now, Mr. Detective; not a poor, innocent sap like Ducey. Don't make me laugh."

Farley's eyes were like twin points of steel. When he spoke his tone cut like a whip-lash.

"I know what I'm up against," said the Headquarters man. "I'm up against the slickest quack that ever robbed a patient. Yes, Paul Niles, alias Doctor Niles Paul, formerly of the Coast, New York and Chicago, and a dozen other places; I know what I'm up against. But I never thought you'd commit murder."

Again the pseudo physician gave vent to laughter. Dan Farley silenced him by scathingly adding:

"You don't think we've got the goods on you, eh? Then listen to this: The first time I got my glims on you, your mug seemed vaguely familiar to me. When Garvin there saw you, he refreshed my memory. You've never played these parts before, but we saw you on trial for fraud in San Francisco. Garvin and I was there to bring back a crook who was wanted here for a hold-up. I was going to run you out of the city then, but thought I'd look into this Hixon murder a little more. I wasn't at all satisfied with the verdict, although, under the circumstances, the jury could hardly do different. Then I got busy, and was rewarded with the following results:

"You met Mildred Hixon at some social function, and learned that her father was reputed wealthy. She in turn introduced you to her parent, who you found to be a pretty keen man, not at all suited for your profession—not doctoring, either. Then your crafty mind turned to other methods. You made up your mind to marry Mildred Hixon, and when the old man died, you expected you'd be on Easy street—generally speaking.

"Then again you got another bump," went on Farley relentlessly. "You discovered you had a rival. But a little thing like that in your young life, Niles, mattered little. You expected to remove him without jeopardizing yourself, at the same time hasten your marriage to the unsuspecting girl and get her fortune into your hands. So you set forth to kill a flock of birds with one stone.

"First you got into the good will of young Ducey. Then that day when you and he were having lunch, you told him he looked ill. Good! You said so. You were supposed to be a doctor. He fell for it. You had him call at the office and gave him the once over—blood pressure and so on. Then you gave him a pill, telling him to phone you when he got home. Why? Because you wanted to be sure he was out of the way for the time being. The pill you gave him wasn't quinine, it was morphine. Why, again? So that he'd sleep soundly while you went through with your crooked work."

Paul Niles's face was ghastly, but he sat unmoved. Farley went on:

"Ten minutes after receiving Ducey's phone call, you rang up Mr. Hixon's place, and was answered by Miss Smith, who was just leaving for lunch. You told her in a hoarse voice that you were Robert Ducey, and you were going to call on Mr. Hixon on important business. So far, so good. You knew that the old man and the young clerk had quarreled, so that made your scheme stronger. You knew that young Ducey would be dead to the world, and there was no danger from him. You also knew that the old man's daughter was away. Now I'll tell you just how you did it.

"When you were giving Ducey the blood test you told him to raise and grip in his hand several articles which were lying on your desk. There was one article lying there—and it's supposed to be still there—that you were most particular should be within easy reach of his hand. A glass paperweight! One exactly like the one laying there now, but not that one! Ducey unconsciously picked it up in the course of the blood test, leaving his fingermarks on the smooth, clean surface! I know. You put me through the same course.

"The rest was easy. With Ducey safe asleep in bed, Mildred Hixon calling on friends in the West End, Margaret Smith out to lunch, your plans were working fine.

"You carefully wrapped up the paperweight so as not to blur young Ducey's fingerprints and hurried across town to Mr. Hixon's store. He greeted you as a friend, and no doubt waved you to a seat until he'd finished some business he was engaged in at his desk when you disturbed him.

"You waited, biding your time, till the old man's attention was diverted from his work, then you picked up his paperweight and struck him down! Both paperweights are exactly alike! Both are glass, cheap, of the advertisement variety; a local insurance company circulated them a year or so ago!"

"It's a lie! A damn lie!" hissed the phoney doctor, starting to his feet, only to be forced back again by Farley's powerful arm.

"Sit down," he ordered. "I haven't finished yet." Then he resumed: "After you killed the old man, you pocketed the weapon you used and carefully laid on the floor beside the desk where the murdered man was sprawled the paperweight with Robert Ducey's fingerprints on it! Then you hurried away, I suppose feeling badly that you couldn't loot the place. Of course you couldn't do that very well, Niles; it would have upset your plans.

"Then you set out to pay court to Mildred Hixon. You got her to say she'd marry you, thinking you were her friend and also a friend of her doomed sweetheart. Then the crash came and your vis-

ions of wealthent up in thin air. You at once broke thengagement, much to the young lady's rf. That's the story, Niles, so you might ; as well admit it, because we got you, away, and I haven't played my trump caret."

Niles, whosepering fingers were gripping the arms the chair on which he was slumped, was nking rapidly. His ashy-hued face twisA and he gritted his teeth. Then, like a ift of sunshine breaking through a rain-oud, his face cleared. He raised reptilian eyes to the detective's face and sneered.

"Nothing doing, Farley," he taunted. "You ain't got a leg to stand on. There's thousands of those paperweights in circulation—you'll admit that yourself—so where do you fit with your chain of evidence? Forget it, and get out of here, or I'll make you the laughing-stock of the department."

He threw his head back and laughed again. Finally he ceased his merriment and glanced balefully at the two Headquarters men.

"Some cops, I'll say," he snarled. "You're up against a real guy now!"

Farley and Garvin had not spoken a word during the spurious physician's outburst. But their glances met understandingly.

"Not so fast, Niles," said Farley, his cold gray eyes looking straight into the greenish ones of the man in the chair. "I will admit that there are thousands of such paperweights in circulation, but," his voice sank almost to a whisper, "look on the bottom of that paperweight which you have on your desk, that which you struck down Seth Hixon with, and you'll see something you overlooked—Mildred Hixon's initials scratched on the enamel surface at the bottom."

With a cry like a trapped beast, Niles sprang up, grabbed the glass paperweight and turned it over. A curse sprang to his lips when he discovered he'd been tricked. Not a mark was on the white, smooth surface. He whirled at bay. Garvin, like a mountain, stood before the door. Farley was at his side, a pair of shiny handcuffs in his hand.

"I did it, you hounds," he snarled, "but you'll never take me alive!"

The next instant a blue-nose automatic appeared in his hand.

"Back!" Niles cried. "I've a good mind to plug you, Farley!"

Slowly he backed to the door, his menacing gun covering the two Headquarters men, whom he had herded together. He stopped at the door and yanked it open.

"Don't move," he warned, slowly backing into the hall. He closed the door with a bang and sped swiftly down the stairs and into the crowded street.

Farley was the first to act when the door closed behind the fugitive.

"Garvin," he snapped, "yell out the window to the traffic officer! Tell him to head Niles off! I'll go after him."

The next instant, revolver in hand, Farley was racing after the self-confessed murderer.

When Niles reached the street he pocketed his automatic. The usual morning crowd thronged the pavements, a policeman guiding traffic on a nearby corner. He glanced furtively right and left, then started east as Garvin's cry attracted the traffic policeman, who came towards him running.

"Get out of my way," ordered Niles savagely, his gun out again. Women screamed and fainted and men sought cover. The traffic policeman halted in the act of drawing his service revolver. Niles backed around the next corner, then took to his heels, Farley's and the traffic officer's guns sending a hail of lead after him.

Only once did the fugitive turn and return the fire. Both officers sprang into a nearby doorway. Then as Niles resumed his flight the policemen rushed after him again, their guns belching lead and flame as they ran. The fugitive, who was outdistancing his pursuers, was seen to stagger and almost fall.

"We got him!" breathed Farley, nearly spent from the chase. The traffic policeman only grunted as the fugitive recovered himself and turned into an alley. When Farley and the policeman came to the place where Niles turned in he was nowhere in sight. Blood spots were seen everywhere,

leading to the "blind" end of the alley; part of the fence which surrounded the old ball park closed that end.

The quest proved fruitless. Farley hurried to the nearest patrol-box and sent out a general alarm, then turned and walked in the direction of the late Seth Hixon's house.

"I'll run in and warn Miss Hixon against Niles," mused Farley, "and I'll tell her the good news. Poor kid, she's probably gathering her few scant belongings making ready to vacate."

As the Headquarters man came in sight of the unpainted wooden building in which Seth Hixon had lived a piercing cry for help rent the morning air. The voice came from the Hixon house. Dan Farley sprang forward and broke into a run.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MILDRED HIXON had been sitting on a trunk, a suitcase at her feet, gazing sadly at the old home she was about to leave. Miss Smith, who had been her constant companion since her father's death, had left the house but a few minutes before in quest of an expressman to convey Mildred's trunk and suitcase to her father's friends in the West End. Laborious breathing in the room caused her to raise her tearful eyes, then her body stiffened and she tried to cry out. Her tongue was paralyzed, only a guttural sound escaping her white lips.

A hatless, bloody, disheveled man leered at her as he gripped the back of a chair and swayed drunkenly. His sweat-streaked, marble-white face looked hideous, and his cruel lips were curled back in a wolfish snarl.

"They're after me," he whispered hoarsely. "Do you understand? I've got to have money to get away!"

"Who's after you?" asked the startled girl.

"The police, damn them! They say I killed your old man!"

"And did you?" breathed the girl, a ray of hope seeping through her misery.

Niles leered horribly as he staggered towards her. He grinned with mirth as she shrank from him in terror. As he stood swaying over her she could feel his hot breath on her face. Again she tried to call out, but in vain. She shuddered when his tapering fingers touched the soft flesh on her neck to tear a gold chain and locket away.

"Yes, I did, if it'll do you any good to know," bragged the murderer. "I killed the old skinflint so's that I could marry you and get hold of his money! Then good-night for you, doll-face; it would have been me for the White Lights and the she-girls. Give me what money you've got, and those rings!"

Nearly dead with fright, the girl emptied her purse into his outstretched hand. Two diamond rings she removed from her fingers, and these she also placed in his hand.

"There, please go," she begged faintly.

"Give me that ring, too," he demanded fiercely, pointing to a heavy gold band on one of her fingers.

"No—no, please, Doctor Paul," she pleaded, covering the ring with her other hand. "Don't take that. It's my mother's wedding ring, the only thing I have to remember her by. Please don't."

The murderer gripped her firmly by the shoulder, sinking his fingernails into her soft flesh. With his free hand he grabbed the finger encircled by the ring and strove to tear it off.

"Curse you and your sentimental bunk!" he hissed, swearing foully as the ring refused to yield. "Give it to me, or I'll send you to join that skinflint father of yours."

The world about Mildred was growing dark. She felt no pain as the brute tore at her tender finger. Like a hideous nightmare she heard the jumbled cursing of the man, then she closed her eyes as his fingers encircled her throat. Then came oblivion.

When Detective Farley raced up to the entrance of the Hixon house, the front door was slightly ajar. Without pausing he bounded up the few steps and rushed

inside. There he listened for a split-second as the sounds of muffled curses reached his ears. With a revolver in his hand he hurled himself up the stairs to the living apartment and stood breathless before a tableau that made him see red.

'Stick 'em up, you hound!" ordered Farley, his eyes aflame, his finger trembling on the trigger.

Like a flash Niles dropped the girl, whirled around, his automatic roaring. But it was only an echo to the Headquarters man's service gun.

The automatic fell to the floor with a loud clatter. Niles looked blankly at the officer, clawed the air for an instant, then crashed to the floor and lay beside his gun.

Several days later Farley walked into the ward-room of the Mercy Hospital. A white-capped nurse guided him to a spotless cot where a pale figure lay beneath the snowy covering. A blue-coated policeman was seated beside the bed.

"Take a little stroll outside and get the air, Murphy," smiled the detective. "The doctor tells me the patient is coming around all right, so I'm going to have a few words with him."

"All right, Dan," returned Murphy; "glad to get the chance."

When the policeman departed Farley turned to the man on the cot, who was eyeing him through slitted lids.

"Well, Niles, how are you?" Farley inquired. "We've presented your signed confession, and the court has turned young Ducey loose. Are you glad?"

The sufferer slowly opened his eyes and looked straight at the Headquarters man's face. The eyes were not baleful, they were faded and watery.

"Yes, Farley," he murmured weakly, "I am glad. You may not believe me, but it's true. I've been a rotter all my life, and I'm only going to get what I deserve. You have the whole thing doped out just as it happened, but how you did it is beyond me. Tell me one thing, Farley: was it that fellow who signed himself Solley—was it him that saw me do it, and peached?"

The Headquarters man could hardly suppress a grin—not a smile of victory over the wasted figure on the cot, but at the ludicrousness of the question.

"No, Niles," said Farley, "you peached on yourself. Your guilty conscience did it, boy. Solly was a myth—a creation of my own, phantom ally to test your conscience. I'll tell you how it came about.

"From the first I didn't believe young Ducey guilty. I couldn't see anything else but a plot to ruin him. But I couldn't prove it. I checked up everybody connected with the case, simmering them down to you. There I stopped. You had a police record; you were paying attention to Mildred Hixon. When I awoke young Ducey that afternoon, I could see by his eyes that he had taken a narcotic drug, although he said—and you verified it—that the pill you gave him was quinine. Then the strange request to have him phone you when he got home; the disguised voice over the phone; the twin paperweights; the blood test whereupon the patient was obliged to lift and grip various articles on your desk; and last, but not least, your courtship of old Hixon's daughter, and your quick change of heart when you found out the old man died broke. All those things kindled a deep suspision in my mind, although—as you told me once—I didn't have a leg to stand on."

The patient nodded.

"Then I created Solley. Every criminal is more or less superstitious. They always betray a guilty conscience, especially when something crops up that causes them to think that they have slipped a cog. That's where Solley stepped in. I wrote the notes, and you fell for them. If your conscience had been clear you would have placed the matter in my hands. Then came the last note demanding twenty-five dollars. I made those three trips to your office just to run up that little bill.

"I knew from the first that you were crooked and that you'd string me along for some easy money. Then, as you know, I paid you with a new, crisp, twenty-dollar bill. That bill was marked. You put it in an envelope, and at eight o'clock that same night you went over to the post-office, where I watched from behind the stamp clerk's window, and I saw you drop it into

the waste-basket near the door. Even then I would have had a hard time trying to pin the crime on you. A good lawyer would have shot all my evidence to bits. But you know how I tricked you about the initials on the paperweight, and how you confessed. Guilty conscience, Niles. The god of chance did it all."

The sufferer lying on the cot closed his eyes as the Headquarters man stood up. He opened them slowly as Farley turned his head and beckoned an attentant.

"Tell Officer Murphy I'm going," he ordered the white-coated employee. Niles licked his dry lips, then asked:

"So—that was the Solley that landed me here?"

"That's the true story, Niles," smiled Farley.

"Well I'll be d——"

"No you won't, Niles," put in the Headquarters man. "You're going on a straighter road than you ever went from now on."

A CONVICT'S STORY

ANTONIO DE GREGORIO, serving from eight to sixteen years in Sing Sing prison, was taken to the Supreme Court recently by two guards to give him an opportunity to right a wrong.

De Gregorio was in charge of the messengers of the brokerage firm of Kean, Taylor & Co. in 1920 and connived with friends on the outside to hold up a bond salesman and messenger who were carrying $466,000 in Liberty bonds to Igoe Brothers in Brooklyn. The bonds were stolen and were never recovered.

Kean, Taylor & Co. were suing the National Surety Company on a $100,000 bond issued by that company indemnifying the brokers in case of loss by theft.

At the trial De Gregorio, who appeared as a witness for his former employer, told of frequenting a barber shop in East Eleventh street, which was also the headquarters of a club of which his brother, Joseph, and some of his friends, including Tony Vanilli, were members.

"On November 29, 1920," said De Gregorio, "I heard that the Liberty bonds would be sent to Igoe Brothers the next day. I stopped at the barber shop on my way home and told my brother that more than $250,000 was to be sent to Brooklyn the following morning. Joe said 'All right,' and he arranged to call me up the next day.

"Austen Young, a bond salesman, was selected to carry the bonds over to Metropolitan avenue, where Igoe Brothers's office was located. I selected Irving Cohen, nineteen years old, to go with him, because he was the smallest runner we had, and I thought would cause the least trouble in case the hold-up was pulled off."

Justice O'Malley asked the witness whether Cohen was armed. De Gregorio replied that he was not.

There were three armed guards employed by Kean, Taylor & Co., said De Gregorio, but he took "good care" that none of them accompanied the bearer of the Liberty bonds. He added that he had telephoned his brother a description of Young and Cohen and told him the route they would take to Brooklyn.

"I didn't hear anything more for some hours," said De Gregorio. "Then I was summoned to the office and Charles E. Reed, Jr., of Kean, Taylor & Co., and questioned as to who had been sent over with the bonds and all the whys and wherefores. While I was in his office two detectives arrived and I was placed under arrest."

The witness said that at first he confessed and then recanting he stood trial and was convicted. Having twice contradicted previous testimony, De Gregorio was asked by counsel for the National Surety Company whether this latest story was true.

"It is," said De Gregorio. "I want to right a wrong as far as I can."

Chance

By DOROTHY SHEA

MORLEY awoke with a stinging pain in his head and found his hands securely tied. For a moment he lay still, trying to adjust himself. What had he done that he lay thus bound?

He turned his head ever so slightly, though it made him wince to do so. Not far from him, watching him with eyes that were expressionless, was a man—a shabby individual—and one who radiated gross materiality, as much as his own person bespoke the highly intellectual.

And then it all came to him with a rush.

He had started out alone to hunt the "Rat," as he was known. The crook had eluded capture long enough; and now that he was wanted for his latest crime (the most cold-blooded murder of an old lady) Morley, gentleman detective, and the keenest mind on the force, had gone after him with the determination of bringing him in dead or alive.

For three days he had trailed the "Rat," until they had come to the cabin in which he now lay. He had remained in hiding until he had seen the man enter the cabin and close the door behind him. He was positive he had him then. He could have shot the crook down, but there was a reward for his return alive, and Morley felt a certain pride in bringing to trail so desperate a criminal as the "Rat."

He had gained the door and, with his gun ready to cover him, had pushed the door inward with his foot; but before his eyes could accustom themselves to the gloom within he received a blow on the head and had known no more until that moment.

Though his head pained him horribly, he managed a sickly grin.

"Got me, didn't you?"

The man nodded almost imperceptibly.

"Well, now that you have me at your mercy, what are you going to do?"

The man spat so close to Morley that he involuntarily tried to shrink back.

"I ain't going to do nothing yet. Soon's night comes you and me'll take a leetle walk. But you won't come back."

Morley's nerves were like iron. He had schooled himself for years never to allow any condition that might arise to upset him. It was only by keeping cool that he had attained to such wonderful success in his profession. But he had to admit to himself that never before had he been in quite such a difficult position. He was as helpless as a babe as he lay there, and he had not the least doubt that the man would make way with him when he was ready, and not let one twinge disturb his conscience.

The "Rat" had never taken his eyes from him. His face was like a mask, but underneath Morley could feel the crook's sinister intent.

"Why don't you kill me now," he asked, "and make your getaway? I didn't get you, but somebody else certainly will. Every moment you stay here makes your capture more certain."

"That's my funeral. What's your hurry to pass out?"

"No hurry, I assure you. The more time drags the better it suits me. I was thinking how your chances of escape dwindle with every moment you stay here."

"Say, if you don't can that line of chatter I'll gag you."

"Oh, don't do that, please. If I couldn't talk I'd die, and cheat you out of the pleasure of killing me. It will be a pleasure, won't it?"

For a moment the "Rat's" eyes flickered, but he said nothing.

"After a moment's silence the detective began again:

"I wish you'd let me sit up. I thought I saw a shadow just behind you, and it gets on my nerves not to be able to see clearly something I think I'm seeing."

The "Rat" gave a slight start.

"Don't worry; there ain't nothing there. This cabin is forty miles from nowhere, and if you hadn't trailed me I'd 'a' been safe here for days."

"Well, looking at it one way, I'm sorry now that I did trail you here. I should have known I couldn't catch you so easily. Say, what was that? Didn't you hear something?"

"Aw, shut your trap! You didn't hear nothing, and neither did I. There ain't nothing or nobody here but you and me, and pretty soon there ain't going to be only me."

"I heard a low moaning," Morley insisted. "I'm all trussed up so I can't move. Go take a look outside, won't you? That's a good fellow. It can't do any harm, and there might be some poor devil there needing attention."

The "Rat" glared at him.

"What's your game wanting to get me outside?"

He was very much annoyed. Not that he would have cared nor lifted a finger even if some one did lay dying at his doorstep; but Morley's constant talk got on his nerves. He didn't know whether he was trying to frighten him, which he must have known he couldn't do, or whether he was thus trying to forget the fact that he hadn't much longer to live.

"What good would it do me if I did get outside? I couldn't move a finger to help myself. It is just that I am human enough to want to aid whoever is in need of help. There it is again. Set me up, won't you? I can't harm you any more in that position than lying here, can I?"

The "Rat" eyed him aggressively. He was in no mood to be trifled with. He could not understand any one in such dire need of help as Morley was at that moment wanting to lend a helping hand to some one else

Finally he reluctantly dragged him to a sitting posture, putting an old packing-box at his back.

"All right. Now you're sitting up, what's the big idea?"

"Thank you," Morley said. "That's better; oh, infinitely better. Now I can see if that shadow gets behind you again. I wasn't sure while lying there whether I saw correctly or not."

The "Rat" whirled around, and then back to Morley, and his jaw took on a look that would have frightened a less cool-headed man. He stuck his gun in Morley's face.

"I'll blow your damned brains out if you pull any more of that shadow stuff."

"All right. It frightened me a bit myself. Let's talk about something else. Tell me, what's your idea in taking me for a walk before you kill me?"

"Because I aim to stay on at this place, and I don't want no stinkin' corpse stayin' here with me. If we walk off a mile or so, then you stay there and I stay here, and I won't have to tote you there when your feet won't walk no more."

"Thanks," Morley said. "That's a very brilliant idea indeed."

He turned his head, taking in the room before him.

"Wonder who would build a cabin like this and only put one window in it? It is sure to be dark even when the sun shines."

The "Rat" did not reply. His glance did not leave Morley's face. When the detective's eyes suddenly opened wide in real or assumed terror, and his face seemed to get pale under the faint light in the room, the "Rat" jumped visibly and glared about him.

"What's the matter?" he snarled.

"Nothing," Morley replied, making an effort to take his gaze from the spot just behind the "Rat."

"You saw something! What was it?"

"It was nothing," Morley insisted. "You told me to drop the subject of—— Say, do you believe in ghosts?"

"Naw, and neither do you. There ain't no such thing."

"Well, I never did before, but——"

The "Rat" was shaken, but he refused to be swayed.

"There ain't no such thing," he repeated and he wheeled and looked behind him, turning livid. His hands shot to his throat, his gun dropping on the floor.

"What's the matter with you?" he snarled when he did not see anything.

Morley was white and shaking like a leaf. He knew he had nothing but his superior intellect with which to fight this big brute, and he must win or lose in the next few minutes.

"Look out, there!" he shouted; "he's coming at you again. Protect your throat. His hands are reaching for your throat."

The "Rat" was swaying like a drunken man. Between his superstitious fear of something he could not see, but which the other man swore he saw, and his natural unbelief of anything supernatural, he was like a wild man.

Morley drove home the advantage he had gained.

"He's slipped behind you again. Turn around quick! Keep your hands around your throat. What horrible bony fingers he has! Oh, if I could help you! Can't you see him? Look there! Right beside you now!"

"The "Rat" turned this way and that, and his hands clutched his throat like steel bands.

"If you are faking this," he managed to gasp, "I'll make hash of you."

"Faking? How could I fake anything so terrible? Oh, how glad I am I never killed a man. Let me loose," he shouted, "and I'll help you. The sight of him is driving me crazy."

And then suddenly a great change came over the "Rat." His hands dropped from his throat, his face resumed its normal expressionless mask and he sat down on the box opposite his victim.

"I might have known you was trying to kid me. Just trying to get loose so's you could kill me afore I killed you."

He picked up the gun that he had dropped and pointed it menacingly at Morley, who knew he had lost, but who would not ask quarter of so evil an enemy.

He looked back unflinchingly.

"I ain't even going to wait to take you for a walk. I'm going to kill you now. If you've got anything to say, say it quick, for you ain't going to be here only a minute longer."

"I've got nothing to say except that you must be sure to shoot straight. I don't want to linger."

The "Rat's" finger touched the trigger.

And then a most horrible sound came to them. It was like no other thing so much as the howl of a lost soul. It was a cry that made one shiver and draw nearer to any protection that might offer. To the "Rat's" ignorant and superstitious mind it was the ghost Morley had seen become a reality. The detective's mind placed it where it belonged, in the throat of some beast of the wilderness that surrounded them.

The "Rat's" eyes closed, and his face become deadly white. The pistol shook visibly, and he dropped it from his nerveless hand, going down on his knees at the same time. His mouth opened and shut, but no sound issued from it. Fear had him in its grip.

And then the queer sound came again. The "Rat" covered his face with his hands until it was over. Then on hands and knees he crawled into a corner, where he huddled. Morley worked feverishly at his bonds. A broken bottle arrested his glance and he rolled over to it and sawed his bonds on the keen edge.

Soon Morley's hands were released and hurt horribly, while the blood tingled back through them. And then he had to rub his eyes. The "Rat" was terror-stricken.

"Let's go," the crook gasped huskily. "This cabin is haunted. We got to get away afore we are killed."

Morley took the handcuffs from his pocket and snapped them shut upon the "Rat's" wrists.

"Come on," he exclaimed harshly. It was almost dark as they emerged from the cabin, but not too dark for Morley to see a form like a large dog slip into the shadows at the edge of the clearing.

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

Send us a specimen of your writing with the coupon printed on page 63 and Miss Rice will analyze the handwriting free of charge. The answer will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of replies can be printed in each issue, owing to lack of space. If you desire an earlier reply in the form of a personal letter from Miss Rice, send us the sample of your writing and the coupon, and enclose 10 cents and a self-addressed stamped envelope, to cover the cost of handling, stationery, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you an answer. No readings will be given unless accompanied by a coupon for each individual.

—THE EDITOR.

WILLIAM BRAND HOMER—The sample of writing you sent is good enough to give a fair index to your character, and to show your best qualifications. Jovial, a good mixer, and evidently a commercial drummer. If not, you should be. Anyhow, you're a born seller of goods, make friends easily, and very likely hold their regard. Fond of the ladies. Looks as if you'd make an ideal husband and father. Of course I don't know whether you are married or not, but you should be a good provider. Your greatest drawback is your excessive generosity. If you keep on squandering your hard-earned ducats you'll die a poor man. You have another fault—too much superstition. It's a cinch you'd never walk under a ladder or break a mirror. You'll never be your own boss, though, as you don't show enough energy and haven't the art of scheming successfully.

TWILIGHT—You're a young man who loves to travel, draw pictures, read books, and experiment with electricity or steam. Well-balanced in the head, painfully healthy and buoyant of spirits, and daring to a degree. You lack business judgment, but think a great deal of your own enjoyment and comfort. In fact, you areselfish. Nobody profits much by you. You are lazy, too, and enjoy every moment of your life.. I don't know how rich you are, but you should have been born wealthy to satisfy your taste for luxury and ease. Your mind is too active. You are likely to invent things of a mechanical nature, but it is doubtful if you will ever make much money out of them.

ETHAN A. A.—There is positively no excuse for any one to complain that the world does not "give him a chance." It is true that the world is rather hard on all of us, but most people don't whine about it. There! I know you will think that I am too harsh with you, but if you will just remember that I never said a really unkind thing to a client in my life, maybe you will realize that I am trying to help you by giving you a shock. If I can wake up that pride of yours, which is really strong, you will "come out of it," and be again the virile and active person that you were. Yes, the world is hard, but it will respect courage when it will not respect anything else. If you try to get a job with this feeling, "it's no use, anyway" (as you say) why, you will get just what you are looking for. The way in which we approach people, and, after all, "the world," means just one person after another, is what makes our lives one thing or another. Be more confident. Your handwriting shows that you have a good mind, and that you would have an interesting personality if you gave it half a chance.

ROBERT D.—That fine Spencerian hand, those evenly formed letters, their straight alignment are the painstaking finish of a mathematician, and you like to dress well. Each letter made me feel like bursting into all sorts of praise until I noted certain shadings, a lightness of pen touch, a few flourishes, and a persistent contraction of the letter "o." Then the sense conveyed by what you wrote has a bearing, too. The signature is a man's, but the writing was done by a middle-aged woman of strong vitality; a firm-minded person with wonderful ideals in life; a love for the beautiful and pure in all things, and well-balanced judgment. You could rule in any enterprise with great success if it were not for the fact that you love praise too much and are of a very changeable mind. Moreover, you are pretty deceptive in trifling matters and very frank in more important affairs. Character away above the average. So you have very few flaws I can pick on. I should judge that commercial employment would suit you, but you'd never make a good saleswoman. Clerical work is your line.

J. K. L. OF EVANSVILLE.—You ought to give me a name by which I can address you here. As you did not, I am using your initials and the name of your town. Yes, I believe that you would be a successful salesman. You have the inventiveness and resourcefulness and tact which are part of the equipment of such a worker. I don't see, however, that you have as much self-confidence as you should. And this is a most vitally necessary element for such work as you propose, you know. There are no mystic processes by which you may gain self-confidence. It is a thing that you have to slowly build up, little by little. The best thing for you to do, I think, is to go and take that position of which you speak, selling that small object in the towns around your home city, until you get over your "stage fright"; then you could take up the more serious work on which your heart is set.

DISTRACTED MOTHER—Oh, pshaw, Sis! Don't you think you're looking at things with dark-blue specs on? I'm not one of the flapper age myself, but I like a bit of fun as well as any one, and dancing is as natural a thing as breathing, especially for young folks. If your girl has the courage to tell you everything she does, even though she knows that she is going to make you angry by it, I think her a pretty nice child. And this handwriting of her best beau shows that he is a real clean, manly sort of a chap. As you didn't send me hers, I don't know about her, but if she's the kind of girl that this kind of a boy would like, I suspect that you are doing her a lot of injustice. I don't see why you should want her to sit at home in that "small flat" of yours, when this boy has a little car in which they can get some fresh air. And, for goodness sake, when they ask you to go along, "at least three times a week," it seems to me that the situation is an unusually fine and normal one. Go along—not too often!—try to understand these things better, and try to be more friendly. Forget that you are "Ma," and try to be just an older friend. Take my word for it, you will be surprised to find how happy all you three will be.

GEORGE T. DEV.—Your handwriting is that of a person who is affectionate and sweet-tempered, but who is rather shy and self-conscious. This ought to explain to you why you have so much trouble with that girl of yours. Do you *tell* her how much you love her? Or, do you expect her to be a mind reader—eh? I suspect you of being the sort of a man who sits back and waits for the girl to start the advances, and no woman on earth likes that. I'll tell you why, and maybe it will be an enlightener to you. A woman does not like to make love to a man for the simple reason that she's proud of being the one who is pursued, and that when she has to do the pursuing she's out of character and her pride is hurt. W-e-l-l—I don't know about this matter of her being the one who ought to "drop the glove," as you express it. Most women don't want to seem to give a thought to the very man on whom they have an eye. Take a hint, George, and do a little vigorous business!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

If you cannot procure any of the numbers you want from your newsdealer, send us the price, ten cents, in money or postage stamps, and we will mail them to you postage free.

The price of the following numbers is 15 cents:

155 "Laughing Death's Trail," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.
161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.
162 "The Intriguers," by Grover Kidwell.

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d Street, New York City, N. Y.

OUR TEN-CENT HAND BOOKS

Useful, Instructive, and Amusing. They contain Valuable Information on Almost Every Subject.

No. 23. HOW TO EXPLAIN DREAMS.—This little book gives the explanation to all kinds of dreams, together with lucky and unlucky days.

No. 28. HOW TO TELL FORTUNES.—Every one is desirous of knowing what his future life will bring forth, whether happiness or misery, wealth or poverty. You can tell by a glance at this little book. Buy one and be convinced.

No. 40. HOW TO MAKE AND SET TRAPS.—Including hints on how to catch moles, weasels, otter, rats, squirrels and birds. Also how to cure skins. Copiously illustrated.

No. 41. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK END MEN'S JOKE BOOK.—Containing a great variety of the latest jokes used by the most famous end men. No amateur minstrels is complete without this wonderful little book.

No. 42. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK STUMP SPEAKER.—Containing a varied assortment of Stump speeches, Negro, Dutch and Irish. Also end men's jokes. Just the thing for home amusement and amateur shows.

No. 45. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK MINSTREL GUIDE AND JOKE BOOK.—Something new and very instructive. Every boy should obtain this book, as it contains full instructions for organizing an amateur minstrel troupe.

No. 53. HOW TO WRITE LETTERS.—A wonderful little book, telling you how to write to your sweetheart, your father, mother, sister, brother, employer; and in fact, everybody and anybody you wish to write to.

No. 58. HOW TO BE A DETECTIVE.—By Old King Brady, the well-known detective. In which he lays down some valuable rules for beginners, and also relates some adventures of well-known detectives.

No. 65. MULDOON'S JOKES.—The most original joke book ever published, and it is brimful of wit and humor. It contains a large collection of songs, jokes, conundrums, etc., of Terrence Muldoon, the great wit, humorist and practical joker of the day.

No. 67. HOW TO DO ELECTRICAL TRICKS.—Containing a large collection of instructive and highly amusing electrical tricks, together with illustrations. By A. Anderson.

No. 68. HOW TO DO CHEMICAL TRICKS.—Containing over one hundred highly amusing and instructive tricks with chemicals. By A. Anderson. Handsomely illustrated.

No. 69. HOW TO DO SLEIGHT-OF-HAND.—Containing over fifty of the latest and best tricks used by magicians. Also containing the secret of second sight. Fully illustrated.

No. 74. HOW TO WRITE LETTERS CORRECTLY.—Containing full instructions for writing letters on almost any subject; also rules for punctuation and composition, with specimen letters.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, 10c. per copy, in money or stamps, by

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, Inc.
166 West 23d Street, New York City

"Good Bye, Boys!"

"TO-DAY I dropped in for a last word with the boys at the office. And as I saw Tom and Dave there at the same old desk it came to me suddenly that they had been there just so the day I came with the firm four years ago.

"When I started here I was put at a desk and given certain routine things to do. It was my first job and I took it as a matter of course. But after a few months I began to realize that I was nothing but a human machine—doing things that anyone could do and that I couldn't expect to advance that way.

"So I had a talk with the manager, and I'll never forget what he said: 'If you want to get ahead, put in some of your spare time getting special training along the line of your work. We want men who care enough about their future not only to do their work well, but to devote part of their spare time to preparation for advancement.'

"That very night I wrote to Scranton, and a few days later had started studying evenings at home. Why, do you know, it gave me a whole new interest in our business. In a few months I was given more important work and more money. Since then I've had three increases. Six months ago I was put in charge of my department, and now my big chance has come—I'm to be manager of our Western branch at $5000 a year!

"Tom and Dave could never see any sense in my studying nights—they said eight hours was enough for any man to be bothered with business. They had the same chance I had—they could have been big men in the firm to-day. But they stood still while I went up to one of the best jobs in our business. It just shows what spare-time training will do."

For 32 years the International Correspondence Schools have been helping men and women everywhere to win promotion, to earn more money, to have happy, prosperous homes, to know the joy of getting ahead in business and in life. Can you afford to let another priceless hour pass without finding out what the I. C. S. can do for you?

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 5262-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Organization	☐ Better Letters
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Business Law	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Banking and Banking Law	☐ Business English
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)	☐ Civil Service
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Private Secretary	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Architects' Blue Prints
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Metallurgy	☐ Navigation
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Radio	☐ Mathematics

Name.....

Street Address..... 3-6-'24

City..... State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

U. S. Government Needs Men!

WONDERFUL opportunities in Civil Service. Thousands of appointments made yearly. Generous salaries, liberal vacations (as much as 30 days with pay in some branches of the service), pensions, sick leave benefits, short hours (from 9 to 4.30 in Washington), congenial working conditions.

Men and women are needed right along as Income Tax Auditors, Bookkeepers, Post Office Clerks and Carriers, Customs Cashiers, Railway Postal Clerks, Deputy Collectors, Postmasters, Gaugers, Stenographers, etc. Positions are open in Washington and in every city of the country as well as in Alaska, Porto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. Over 39,000 appointments were made in one year in the Post Office Department alone!

"Pull" and influence unnecessary. Common school education is sufficient as groundwork for most positions.

Examinations are easy to pass if you have proper coaching. Right at home in spare time through the International Correspondence Schools you can learn to not only pass your examination, but to pass with a high mark. The higher your rating the more certain you are of an appointment. Thousands of men and women now employed by Uncle Sam prepared for their positions through I. C. S. training.

Mail coupon to-day for 48-page FREE CIVIL SERVICE BOOKLET

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 5263-C . Scranton, Penna.
Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your 48-page CIVIL SERVICE BOOKLET, which tells how I can secure a position with the U. S. Government.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

MORPHINE

New Home Treatment
Send Stamp for Book of Information
DR. QUAYLE'S SANITARIUM
MADISON, OHIO. DEPT. S 50

Are You Lonesome? Write Eva Moore, Box 908, Jacksonville, Fla. Stamp Appreciated.

EARN $25 weekly, spare time, writing for newspapers, magazines. Experience unnecessary. Details free. Press Syndicate, 1058, St. Louis.

EARN $20 weekly spare time, at home, addressing, mailing music, circulars. Send 10c for music, information. **American Music Co., 1658 Broadway, Dept. M-22, New York.**

EARN MONEY WEEKLY, spare time home addressing, mailing, music, circulars. Send 10c for information. New England Music Co., 234 Capen, Dept. K-3, Hartford, Conn.

BE A DETECTIVE

Earn Big Money Travel Big Demand
Experience unnecessary. We train you. Write
AMERICAN DETECTIVE SYSTEM,
1968 Broadway New York City

FREE! FREE! FREE!

A Beautiful Set of Mah-Jongg

Any reader who sends us $3.50 for one year's subscription to "Mystery Magazine" will receive a handsome imported set of the National Game of China.

Act Quickly, as the Number Is Limited This Offer Closes October 1st, 1924

The set contains 144 pieces, comprising a Bamboo Suit, a Circle Suit, a Character Suit and an Honor Suit. It is a complete set of tiles, with the necessary dice, shaker, counters and four black enameled metal racks. Contained in a large, finely decorated Oriental box, the set will be sent, postage free, to any address in the United States on receipt of the subscription price.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT IT

Address your subscription to
HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher
166 West 23d St. N. Y.

COUPON

Entitling the signer to one "reading of character" by Louise Rice.

Name.....

Address.....

City or State.....

Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

A Long-Sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.

By Walter S. Dean

Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only $2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

Simply write in confidence to the Melton Laboratories, 2178 Melton Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and this wonder restorative will be mailed to you, sealed in a plain wrapper. You may enclose $2 or, if you prefer, just send your name without money and pay the postman $2 and postage when the parcel is delivered. In either case, if you report within ten days that you are not satisfied, the purchase price will be refunded on request. The Melton Laboratories are nationally known and thoroughly reliable. Moreover, their offer is fully guaranteed so no one need hesitate to accept it. If you need this widely praised and remarkable rejuvenator, write for it today.

BE SURE TO READ

"Moving Picture Stories"

A Weekly Magazine Devoted to Photoplays and Players.

PRICE TEN CENTS PER COPY

The Best Film Magazine on Earth

FOR SALE ON ALL NEWS-STANDS.

Magnificent Colored Cover Portraits of Prominent Screen Performers!

32 PAGES OF READING · **OUT EVERY TUESDAY**

Each Number Contains Portraits and Biographies of Actors and Actresses—Four Stories of the Best Films on the Screens—Elegant Half-tone Scenes from the Plays—Interesting Articles About Prominent People in the Films—Doings of Actors and Actresses in the Studios—Lessons in Scenario Writing—Poems, Jokes and every bright Feature of Interest in Making Moving Pictures.

THIS LITTLE MAGAZINE GIVES YOU MORE FOR YOUR MONEY THAN ANY OTHER SIMILAR PUBLICATION ON THE MARKET.

Its authors are the very best that money can procure; its profuse illustrations are exquisite, and its special articles are by the greatest experts in their particular line. No amount of money is spared to make this publication the very best of its kind in the world. Buy a copy NOW from your newsdealer, or send 10 cents in money or postage-stamps, and we will mail you, postage free, any issue you desire.

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d Street, New York City